

Out of Step

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Out of Step

by [AdrianaintheSnow](#)

Summary

And suddenly, Tubbo got it. He finally could understand the reason for committing crimes horrendous enough to have warranted tossing his entire bloodline into the Pit. He wasn't much for family anymore, but he could feel his ancestors' blood boiling in his veins. *Wither and die*, he thought, and though he did not have his great-grandmother's powers, he thought he could probably work something out.

If the so called superheroes weren't going to save Tubbo's friend, Tubbo would rip the city apart looking for him himself. (With some help from Ranboo.)

Also known as: One Step Towards The Nearest Bunker Because Holy Shit This Child Is Feral.

(This is a midquel for my story One More Step Out of the Pit. It is not a stand alone and One More Step Out of the Pit should be read before this.)

Notes

Anyone want to see Tubbo's perspective of the events of "One More Step Out of the Pit"?

Thank you for @salt for the title and @crimes for the alternative title. (Who knows what your names are on here)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tubbo shouldered his way past Puffy as soon as they entered The Guild HQ. She'd tried to talk to him during the car ride after she'd unhandcuffed him from an old train car, but he'd mostly tuned her out. He didn't need psychoanalyzing right now. He wanted action, not talk. She gave him a startled look as he pushed past her, but he didn't pay her any mind. He walked straight past the guards at security and into the large general hero office

"Dream!" he yelled upon entering and everyone in the office turned to look at him in shock, but he didn't care about them. "Where is Dream?" he asked the room at large.

There was a moment of silence.

"I'm right here, Clinanthium. There's no need to shout," a voice said, and Tubbo whipped around to face him. He was coming out of his personal office off to the side of the general office, Tubbo's mentor, Quackity in tow. Considering Quackity and Dream didn't exactly like each other, Tubbo imagined it was not a social visit and probably about Tubbo and Tommy. Good, then they already knew.

"Get him back," Tubbo ordered. "Get him back right now."

"Tubbo..." Quackity said. Tubbo liked Quackity most of the time, or at least as much as he could like someone he didn't trust, someone whose real face he'd never seen. He did not like the pitying look in his eyes (green today) or the tone he was using. "Look..."

"Get him back right now!" Tubbo screamed, cutting off whatever bullshit he was about to say.

"Calm down, Tubbo," Dream commanded, and the use of Tubbo's real name instead of his superhero one in front of people who did not know it only served to stoke Tubbo's anger. It was an underhanded show of power and control over Tubbo, and he couldn't *stand* it. Dream reached out a hand to touch his shoulder, and Tubbo felt the usual nasty crawling sensation that Dream's presence usually brought slither up his spine 1000% more intense than usual. This time, worry about consequences for Tommy couldn't tame his reaction.

Tubbo shoved him off angrily. "Don't touch me," he spat.

It was impressive how easily Dream was able to emote his displeasure through his mask. "Now, Tubbo," Dream said, his condescending tone making Tubbo bare his teeth. He saw Quackity wince; the movement made lines appear near the eyes of the face he was using. Quackity had made the mistake of trying a tone like that with Tubbo exactly once. "You can't go around blaming me for your friend's stupid decisions."

"The hell I can't!" Tubbo said. "You're the one who sent him after them! You painted a target on his back and did nothing to protect him. Something like this was always going to happen!"

"And what do you want me to do now?" he tsked, unperturbed. "He didn't exactly leave me any options."

“You have to do something! Get him back!”

“You expect me to, what, go snag him back from the SBI’s secret base I don’t know the location of?” Dream asked. “It’s not worth the resources trying to go after them. We’ll get him back when they’re done with him.” He said the already upsetting statement so casually that Tubbo tasted bile.

“Fuck you Dream.”

“I’ve had enough of this,” Dream declared with an eyeroll. “Quackity, get him under control before I do.”

“Don’t bother,” Tubbo spat. “I’m done. I quit.”

Both men seemed surprised.

“Tubbo...” Quackity said.

“You’re making an irrational decision based on your emotions,” Dream said smoothly like he was explaining something simple to a small child. That alone already incensed Tubbo, but what pushed him over the edge was the next thing he said. “You’re behaving just like Tommy did this morning and look where that got him.”

And suddenly, Tubbo got it. He finally could understand the reason for committing crimes horrendous enough to have warranted tossing his entire bloodline into the Pit. He wasn’t much for family anymore, but he could feel his ancestors’ blood boiling in his veins. *Wither and die*, he thought, and though he did not have his great-grandmother’s powers, he thought he could probably work something out.

He was laughing, he realized belatedly. “You know what, Dream,” he said. “You think you don’t have enough resources to go after Tommy? Well, let’s test it. I am going to tear this city apart looking for him, and you can clean up the damage. Let’s see how long it takes for the price of leaving my friend to suffer to outweigh the price of saving him.”

“With your plant powers?” Dream said, unimpressed. “Exactly how much damage do you think you can do, Tubbo. You’re a level one hero for a reason.”

“Yeah? Let’s see what my level is as a villain,” he snarled. He turned on his heel and beelined towards the door.

He saw Quackity turn and reach out to him, but Dream stopped him. “Let him go,” he ordered. “He’ll figure out he’s making a mistake on his own soon enough.”

Not likely, Tubbo thought as he stormed out. He marched straight to the entrance of the Guild HQ without pause. He was shorter than most people he came across, but apparently something in the way he walked communicated to everyone he crossed that they should throw themselves out of his way because people were all but hopping banisters to avoid him.

He walked straight down the steps outside, but instead of taking off directly in the direction of his apartment, he found himself turning the corner into a small nook between the main building and the connected training facility. Out of view of most passerbyers, he collapsed onto the concrete, pulled his knees to his chest, and let the sob bubbling in his chest tear out of him.

“Are you okay?” a hesitant voice asked after a couple of seconds.

Tubbo's head shot up, but he calmed slightly when he recognized who had spoken: Ranboo.

"I, uh, saw you leave," he explained.

"No," Tubbo said.

"What?"

"No," he sniffed, "I'm not okay."

Ranboo edged closer to him. He stood there, clearly unsure what to do. He shifted his weight back and forth and wrung his hands awkwardly, his tall lanky form hovering nervously over him. It wasn't quite Tommy like. Tommy would be poking him with a stick and telling him to 'Stop that. Quit it. You're snotting all over the place. Gross,' but the awkward nervousness was similar enough to make him sob harder into his knees. "What... what happened?" he asked.

"To- the Red Glider traded himself for me," Tubbo said. "They didn't hurt me. They probably weren't going to because they didn't give a shit about me, but they *hate* him, and no one is even willing to try to get him back."

Ranboo made a sound of distress. It was a weird sound, but Tubbo had worked with him enough to understand it. "I'm sorry," he said. It was the first apology Tubbo had gotten out of either sympathy or an admittance of guilt the whole time. "Dream had... he'd locked him in a jail cell, but I let him out."

Tubbo roughly wiped a tear off his face. "It's not your fault," he said. "Dream did this." It was maybe also a bit of Tommy's fault too because he was a self-sacrificing idiot who didn't think before he acted, but Tubbo could focus on tearing him apart limb from limb as soon as he had him back with all of his limbs attached. "He's going to pay," Tubbo said darkly. "They're all going to pay."

Ranboo shuffled around awkwardly a bit more, but he didn't argue with Tubbo, nor did he run away at the darkness in his tone. "Let me... let me walk you home," he said.

Tubbo nodded and reached up to let Ranboo pull him to his feet.

Weeds had already popped up through the cracks in the concrete he'd been sitting on.

Chapter End Notes

**“WITH YOUR PLANT POWERS?”
DREAM SAID, UNIMPRESSED.**



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Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tubbo was Ranboo's friend, and not like his work friend. They were friend friends. Like, seen your face, know your name sort of friends. They weren't *supposed* to be. The Guild had some pretty strict rules for who got to know your face. It's why Tubbo and the Red Glider were not allowed to work at the same times. Knowing who was under the mask and having a personal connection to them complicated things on the field according to Dream. It was... probably true. He technically outranked Tubbo just slightly despite having less time on the job because of his powers and the fact that he was Dream's mentee, but he didn't think he could get himself to order Tubbo around or anything if they were in the field. That would be just... weird. In fact, he was more likely to listen to Tubbo than he was to make decisions for himself. Now, maybe it would still feel weird even if he didn't know Tubbo's real name, but there wasn't a way to test that.

They'd met because Ranboo had been lost and panicking. He was supposed to meet Dream in the training area. The only problem was he couldn't quite remember where it was even though Dream had just shown it to him the day before. Ranboo had never been naturally good at directions. He thought perhaps that was why he'd developed teleportation powers. Who needed directions if you could just pop to wherever you wanted? Dream didn't like when he teleported without permission, and he'd *know* if Ranboo disobeyed him, so if Ranboo didn't have a really good reason, teleportation was not an option. Getting lost was not a good reason.

Tubbo had found him, had asked if he was Dream's new mentee, and something had flashed in his eyes when Ranboo had confirmed. Ranboo had immediately assumed that he'd hated him. Yet, the boy had asked him what was wrong and then where he was going once Ranboo said he was lost. He'd led him to the training area with barely a word and had turned away before Ranboo could thank him, disappearing right before Dream had appeared. For all Ranboo knew then, with the way he'd appeared out of nowhere to lead him to his destination and then disappeared like mist, he could have been a gytrash who decided to be benevolent on a whim.

To say the least, Ranboo had been absolutely terrified of him.

There had just been something about him. Even now knowing him much better, it still felt like he knew something about the world that Ranboo did not.

Still, they worked overlapping schedules and ended up running into each other often enough. Ranboo had slowly uncovered the very human parts of him. He was typically nice to people even if it was in a sort of fake way and often leaned into his sillier side to entertain and disarm. Yet, he also had a dark sense of humor that bubbled up from inside him out of seemingly nowhere and always caught Ranboo off guard. He was stubborn and independent. Even when he was obeying orders, Ranboo always felt like he was doing so with a smile full of teeth. He was also somehow blindly trusting to anyone who gave him any reason to be, not that many did. It worried Ranboo sometimes with thoughts that if someone realized that about him, it could be taken advantage of. Ranboo did not even know what he had done to earn his trust, but after only a few months of knowing him, he was taking off the mask to show Ranboo his face.

He was also fiercely loyal. No one at the Guild should have been surprised by what had just happened. They should have expected it really. They should be worried about what came next because

Ranboo, despite thinking he knew Tubbo very well, did not recognize the look in his eyes, but he knew to be wary of it.

However, whatever that look would bring would come later. For now, Ranboo had a quite fragile friend to get home and take care of.

He'd never been to Tubbo's apartment before. It was... It was not very nice at all. It was dirty, small, and he was afraid he was going to fall through the floor and either die or panic push through the power lock because he was about to die, teleport, and then have to explain to Dream why he was in the apartment of a guy he wasn't supposed to be friends with after said guy had just quit the Guild and declared war on the city. He wondered why Tubbo didn't just live in Guild provided housing. It was still bad, but it wasn't *this*.

Instead of asking that, he led Tubbo over to a recliner which seemed to be the nicer of the two chairs in the apartment. The other was a visibly structurally unsound hardback kitchen chair. 'Nicer' was pretty relative though because it had mystery stains all over it and a hole in one arm that was clearly made by teeth.

"Do you have tea?" Ranboo asked.

"Hid it behind the soup cans on the bottom shelf because if Red Glider sees it, he'll go on a tirade about how bad tea is for 20 minutes," Tubbo said.

"Uh, okay," Ranboo said, stepping over to the kitchen counter and finding the teabags in a cupboard that was more of a shelf because the door had been ripped clean off. He grabbed a mug that looked microwave safe and started filling it up with water. When he turned back, something was crawling up Tubbo's arm. At first, Ranboo assumed it was a rat or very large bug or something and just about grabbed the nearest blunt object to start hitting it, but then he noticed that it was growing leaves. Ranboo had seen Tubbo use his powers a couple of times before and had always been pretty impressed, but he'd never seen him grow something all the way through like this. Soon enough, yellow flowers grew, bright for a moment before starting to wilt and turn into tomatoes that quickly grew large and plump. Oh.

"Tomato, Ranboo?" Tubbo asked, eyes fixed on him, and Ranboo had no doubt he could read him well even though he'd yet to take the Ender mask off.

Nerves prickled across his skin. Ranboo had grown up in state sponsored foster care. He was very aware of the consequences of having food you weren't allowed.

"D-do you have spaghetti?" Ranboo asked.

That made the intensity of Tubbo's gaze break for a moment. "What?"

"That's something you can do with tomatoes, right?" he asked nervously. "Make pasta sauce?"

"...There should be some sort of pasta somewhere in the cupboards."

Ranboo nodded and dug through the cabinets until he found a box of elbow macaroni pasta. It was a bit expired, but unopened, so it'd probably be okay.

"Onion?" Tubbo asked, suddenly by his side and Ranboo jumped. He looked down at the onion slowly growing to a stop in his hand and swallowed. Oh great. Another illegal vegetable.

Ranboo nodded and took it as Tubbo set the tomatoes he'd just grown on the counter. Tubbo watched him silently as he struggled through making a pasta sauce since he normally just used a can and was working on vague memories of cooking shows that the matron at the orphanage used to play. He ended up with something that at least looked like spaghetti sauce and poured it over the cooked noodles once it was finished before dishing out two servings.

Ranboo sat on the wobbly kitchen chair while Tubbo returned to his armchair. He'd shoved the mug of tea down into the hole on the couch like it was a cupholder and not some animal's abandoned (god he hoped) nest. Ranboo took a bite of the pasta. The sauce was way too tomatoey and didn't have enough... whatever made it into pasta sauce and not just chunky tomato juice. Still, he forced a couple of bites down.

There, he thought, looking over at Tubbo. Now he was as culpable for this food as the boy who'd grown it.

"So," Tubbo said as they ate. "You can teleport."

It wasn't a question because he already knew that was Ranboo's powers, but Ranboo winced. "Sort of..."

"What do you mean 'sort of'?" Tubbo asked.

"Uh," Ranboo said. "You know how I said I helped Red Glider escape from Dream."

"Yeah."

Ranboo looked down at his bowl of tomato stuff, "Dream wasn't really happy about that," he said softly.

The aura around Tubbo darkened. "What did he do?"

Ranboo twitched. "He suspended me from the Guild for a couple of months and locked down my powers until then."

Tubbo's eyebrows knit in confusion. "Like he... put a power suppressant on you."

"Not exactly," he said. "Uh, it's a thing for people with certain powers like teleportation. We can't always control it really well, especially when we're younger. So, when someone expresses teleportation powers, they're given an implant. It, uh, attaches your powers to a remote that your next of kin is allowed to use. It lets them do things like make it so you can't teleport, and it can track your teleports and stuff. It's usually given to a parent or spouse or something. Dream's my legal guardian so..."

Tubbo's eyes were wide. "What? They can do that? That's horrible!"

It was, sort of, but... "There are reasons," he said softly.

"What sort of reasons could justify that?!" Tubbo asked, looking enraged. "He literally just has control over you."

Ranboo looked down at his hands. "Well," he said. "Once when I was 9, the foster family I was with liked to ignore me." It had been a bit more than just ignoring. They'd lock him in a room and lock his powers down so he wouldn't bother them and forget about him. One time, they'd forgotten about him for too long and, in a desperate need for water, he'd broken through the block on his powers. "I panic

teleported to the bottom of a lake once and got my foot stuck under a huge rock. I almost drowned but managed to teleport again at the last moment. I wish they would have noticed and pushed the button that forced me to teleport to them then.”

Tubbo stared at him for a moment, clearly unsure what to say. “I...” his lips drew into a line. “Dream shouldn’t have something like that.”

Ranboo shrugged. There wasn’t much he could do about it. He was a minor and Dream was his guardian. He could technically petition the courts somehow if he filed a police report, but who, officer or judge, would listen to him over Dream?

They went back to eating their tomato soup with pasta. Ranboo finished first as Tubbo kept staring off into space, stirring the meal idly before taking another slow bite. When he finally did put the bowl aside, he looked up.

“Ranboo, how old are you?”

“16,” he answered.

“Hmm,” Tubbo said. “Ranboo?”

“Yeah?”

“How do you feel about getting married?”

Chapter End Notes



(Edited image source:
https://www.reddit.com/r/dankmemes/comments/azxn14/just_focus_on_the_pikachu/)

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Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Isn’t this kind of marriage fraud?” Ranboo asked. He was nervous, but a different type of nervous than he was right before he was sent out on a mission that could kill him. It was more like the type of nervous he got before he had to go to a check in with Dream. Namely, it was worse.

They were seated on a bench in a small park near the courthouse, Ranboo sitting perfectly still to let Tubbo fuss with the finishing touches on his suit even while he was wringing his hands like he was a snake trying to finish off his shed and his hands were the only part with dead skin still on them. They were lucky they both had suits for formal occasions provided by the Guild. They’d changed into them in the park bathroom. With a few altercations and without the matching masks, they passed as civilian suits well enough.

“Oh, Ranboo,” Tubbo said, not even glancing at his face, and instead focusing on pinning a boutonnière of one yellow, one purple, and one orange flower to his lapel. Tubbo had snagged them from a bush outside a fancy building on their way here and had made them bloom himself. They’d had to walk, since Ranboo couldn’t teleport, and neither of them had a car or bus pass. They were probably a bit sweatier than most people on their wedding days. “It’s not kind of marriage fraud,” Tubbo told him. “It is!”

“Right,” he said, his voice cracking at the end. “Um, and you’re sure we should do this? Can we even do this? We’re only 17.”

“Well, people 16 and over can get married with a parent or guardian’s permission *or* with a court order in this province. We just need to show a ‘profound and abounding’ need.” He’d spent the last night researching to make sure they would be able to feasibly pull it off as well as everything he needed to know about things like when the necessary offices were open. He hadn’t slept. He wouldn’t have anyway. He’d found it should be possible. Legally. They might have to fight a bit to get people to agree, but he was certain they could do it with the right persuasion. He patted the flowers he’d just secured and leaned back.

“And, uh,” Ranboo asked, “how are we doing that?”

Tubbo smiled at him. “The way anyone gets anything done in the legal world: blatant manipulation and barely restrained violent anger.” He patted Ranboo’s cheek. “Just follow my lead.” He still looked a little bit like he might be sick to his stomach. Tubbo sighed and stilled the other boy’s hands from where Tubbo was legitimately afraid he might start breaking his own skin. “Hey,” he said, “it’ll be fine. What’s a bit of nuptials between friends?”

“It’s not about that,” Ranboo said, “at least not exactly.” He paused. “It’s just... what if he finds out. Before... or after. What if they *call* him?”

“They won’t call him,” Tubbo assured. “If they try, we’ll slap their phone out of their hands and run away.”

“I can’t run, Tubbo,” he reminded, looking away. Tubbo felt his blood boiling, but he slammed a lid over it. Anger came later. First, marriage. Second, preparations. Then, he could be as furious and distraught and in pain as he wanted to be. Until then, he had to be calm. He had to be calculated.

Tubbo took a breath. “That’s exactly why we need to do this,” he said. “Just that is bad enough let alone what else he can do. I’ll fix it and it’ll be fine. I promise.” He stood up from the bench and held out a hand. “Trust me?”

And despite how nervous Ranboo obviously was, he took a breath and took Tubbo’s hand, choosing him once again. If Tubbo had the luxury of processing his emotions right now, he might be able to find just one positive one in that moment.

He’d never had someone he could trust other than Tommy before. He’d thought he’d had people he could depend on once when he’d been young, but he’d learned his lesson on that. Most love wasn’t permanent. People would always find a reason to pick someone or something else over you. Tommy had been the only person who always chose him... even when Tubbo wished he hadn’t. Yet, here Ranboo was, choosing Tubbo again even when he looked like he might be sick from it. History seemed to repeat itself. Everyone had turned their backs on Tubbo again, but one person had not. One person had stayed.

Tubbo led him towards the courthouse. They had to go through a metal detector and had their IDs checked with the power registry. Ranboo had to get a power suppressant, but Tubbo’s power was deemed not a risk for the courthouse, so he was allowed through without one. Tubbo had the office numbers they needed to go to memorized at this point, and quickly led Ranboo to the Circuit Clerk’s office.

Tubbo knew this would be the hardest part. The power registers office and even the actual marriage certificate wouldn’t be too bad once they had the right paperwork. Convincing someone to give them a court order allowing them to get married underaged without parental permission was not going to be as easy.

The next three hours were spent telling various adults why they were there and arguing with them when they tried to shut them down. Somehow, they ended up in an older man’s office seated across from him as he looked down his nose condescendingly at them. Tubbo had never gone to a real school, but he had a feeling this was similar to how it’d be if you were in trouble with the principle.

“So,” he said. “The two of you want to get married?”

“Yep,” Tubbo said with a smile as though he had not already said this multiple times to multiple people in this office. As if this man had not been called in specifically to deal with them.

“And what do your parents think about that?”

“We’re both orphans,” Tubbo replied.

“Ah,” he said, steepling his fingers and looking at them over them. “What about your guardians?”

“I’m emancipated,” Tubbo said, “and Ranboo’s guardian is a dick who we didn’t tell.” Ranboo kept his eyes on the desk. Tubbo patted his knee softly.

“Well, you see kids,” he explained slowly. “You need a parent or guardian to sign off on you two getting a marriage certificate so...”

“Actually, we don’t,” Tubbo cut him off with a pleasant tone. “In this province you need a parent or guardian to sign off on it *or* a court order. Which is why we came here.”

“Technically that’s true,” the man conceded, pursing his lips, “but in order to get a court order, you would need to demonstrate some extenuating circumstances to the judge to prove you have to get married.”

“And we’ve already explained that both of us are independent financially, that Ranboo’s guardian’s role is more of a formality since he lives alone, and that considering our lines of work put our lives in danger, it would be a mental, social, and financial benefit for the two of us to get married now considering our relationship.”

“Well, you see,” he splayed his hands out on the desk in front of him, “typically ‘extenuating circumstances’ refers to a situation the two of you will... likely not run into. I would suggest you have a conversation with your guardian and perhaps talk to a counselor about if you are truly ready for this step in your relationship. I can...” He began to drone on and on about things and Tubbo had had enough.

Tubbo turned fully away from the man to face Ranboo and let a bit of his frustration and anger bleed into the dangerous smile that curled up his lips. “Oh Boo,” he cooed, interrupting the clerk mid-sentence. “I *told you* it was a yellow and purple theme.” He reached forward and plucked the orange flower from the boutonnière all without letting the smile drop from his face. He held it by the stem and pushed his powers into it. The petals of the flower started to wither, curling in upon themselves and browning before his eyes. It crumbled a moment later, turning into dust in his hand. With a head tilt, he turned his hand over and let the dust pour onto the man’s desk. He stared at the dust pile for a moment and then looked back up at the clerk who had gone quiet. “I’m sorry,” he said, “What was it you were saying?”

“...You will need a ‘Permission to Marry’ form,” the clerk said nervously. He pulled his hands down from where they’d been splayed on the desk into his lap. “If the, uh, judge signs off on it, you can get a marriage license without his guardian’s permission.”

“That sounds great,” Tubbo said. “I read it can take up to 72 hours for the marriage certificate after we sign that, but I assume there is a way to speed that up. We would really like to be married pretty quickly, after all.”

“I am... sure it can be expedited.”

“Great!” said Tubbo. “Where’s the form and the judge?”

Chapter End Notes

"Ranboo had to get a power suppressant, but Tubbo's power was deemed not a risk for the courthouse, so he was allowed through without one."

The Courthouse the very next day:



The Clerk: Man. I think I almost died.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ranboo was surprised how efficient Tubbo's, er, persuasion was in pushing their paperwork through. True, Ranboo was aware of how scary he could be and watching a flower die in his hand had made Ranboo squirm uncomfortably in his seat. He didn't know if it was better or worse knowing that it was very premeditated. *He'd* been the one to put the flower in Ranboo's suit. Yet, he still hadn't expected the adult in the room to start cowering in fear. Ranboo was creeped out, sure, but he hadn't thought it was that scary, though maybe that's because it wasn't directed at him. Maybe he just trusted Tubbo enough not to really fear him anymore.

The clerk feared him though. After filling out the 'Permission to Marry' form, the rest of the process went rather smoothly. The judge talked to them a bit, but with some nudging from the clerk, he eventually signed off on the 'Permission to Marry' form and then they had a marriage license and, immediately after, a marriage certificate.

Ranboo was married now. Huh.

Then came the hard part, or... what Ranboo had assumed would be the hard part. They ended up on the fourth floor of the courthouse in an office that Ranboo knew far better than most people: the Power Registries office.

"Hi," Tubbo said to the woman at the front desk. "We just got married, and we'd like to transfer the possession of a Power Regulator to me."

"What type of power?" she asked.

Tubbo glanced at him. "Oh," Ranboo said, once he processed that he was supposed to speak. "Uh, I have a teleportation power." He pulled out his ID and slid it over the counter along with the marriage certificate. Tubbo handed his ID over as well.

Unlike everyone at the Circuit Clerk's office who had hemmed and hawed about two minors wanting to get married, the person at this desk only glanced at the marriage license and their IDs briefly before nodding and handing them back. "You can wait there for the next available clerk," she said, gesturing to a couple of wooden chairs.

It wasn't the first time Ranboo had sat in these chairs in this office. He'd been here many times before. Every time he got a new foster placement or was returned to the group home, he'd end up in here as they transferred ownership of his remote. This was the first time he'd ever been here out of choice, the first time he ever wanted the person being given the remote to have it.

The last time he'd come here had been right after he'd been legally adopted by Dream...

Tubbo reached over, interrupting his thoughts to take his hand. Ranboo's eyes shot to him. "Doing okay, oh husband of mine?" The tone was joking, but the question seemed sincere. He didn't look terrifying sitting here, smiling at him cheekily, joking lightly about their brand-new sham of a marriage, but Ranboo knew he could be in a moment if he decided to be. Despite that, Ranboo knew he could trust him. He'd trusted him last night and he'd trusted him earlier this morning, so he could trust him now too.

Ranboo nodded and squeezed his hand.

“You sure?” he asked.

“I don’t have the best memories of this place,” he admitted quietly, so the receptionist could not hear, “but I’ll be fine.”

Tubbo leaned over to bump their shoulders together and Ranboo couldn’t help but smile at him.

It was around then that they were called back into one of the offices. Tubbo was given a sizable stack of forms to fill out and they relinquished their IDs and marriage certificate once again to be copied and put into Ranboo’s files.

To Ranboo’s surprise, the woman doing the ownership transfer actually addressed Ranboo a couple of times. Every time before, he’d been forced to just sit in silence while his case worker and whatever adult he was being given to talked to the clerk over his head. In fact, he was pretty sure *this* woman was one of said clerks that had ignored him before. Today, however, she talked to them both about them getting married and wished them well. He eyed Tubbo carefully, wondering if he was somehow making the woman talk to him, but his eyes were on the paperwork. Ranboo squeezed the hand he was still holding on the desk.

Once Tubbo managed to slowly work through the mound of paperwork, the clerk pulled a new remote out from one of the filing cabinets behind her desk. It looked mostly the same as the one Dream had but with a couple of aesthetic updates. He dutifully pulled up his hair and tilted his head forward so she could tap it to the back of his neck, linking it up with the microchip that had been implanted there when he’d first gained his powers. Once finished with that, she asked them to wait a few minutes while she finished setting up the remote.

He felt a lurch in his already kind of nauseous stomach when his teleportation powers suddenly returned to him, the command to not teleport releasing as the old remote’s hold on him was overridden by this new remote’s. A moment later, she said. “Alright, all done,” and handed the remote over to Tubbo.

Ranboo mostly tuned out her explanation of all of the remote’s functions, knowing full well exactly what it could do, not to mention having heard the spiel many times before. Instead, he chose to just close his eyes and let himself breathe now that it didn’t feel like there was a constant pressure on his chest. He always forgot how bad that was until it was over.

“It saves up to 3 months’ worth of tracking data, but you can only access that if you plug it into a computer. Otherwise, you’ll just be able to see the last location teleported to. Any questions?” the clerk was asking when Ranboo finally tuned back in.

“All previous remotes were disabled, right?” Tubbo confirmed.

“Yes,” Ranboo said under his breath, but it was covered by her much louder, “Yep.”

“Any questions you want to ask, Ranboo?” Tubbo said.

“Huh?” he said with a blink. “Oh. No.”

“Alright then, is that everything?”

“It is,” she said.

“Great. Thanks for the help. Let’s go.” He took the remote from the desk and practically pushed Ranboo out of the office. “Fucking creepy shit,” he mumbled under his breath as he led Ranboo out of the Power Registries office. Tubbo didn’t stop pulling him along until they were out of the courthouse entirely.

As soon as they exited the building, Tubbo sighed in relief. “Welp,” he said, “that’s done,” and then he was shoving the remote into Ranboo’s hand.

Ranboo froze immediately, mouth slightly agape as his hands automatically curled around the plastic to keep it from falling to the ground. The world seemed to pause for a moment.

He’d never... he’d never held the remote before. He remembers reaching for it curiously once, not knowing yet what the thing his foster parents had carelessly set down on the table was. They’d slapped his hand away and yelled at him for it. They hadn’t even explained, and he’d had to piece together why they’d done that years later when he’d learned what the remote did.

He didn’t know it was even possible for someone to just hand it to him so easily, so casually, like he was handing him a remote to open a garage. Ranboo could do whatever he wanted with this remote in his hands instead of someone else’s. Of course, if he took off, it would be short-lived. Tubbo could just turn around and request a new one from the office they’d just come from, deactivating this one within the hour. Would he though? For some reason, Ranboo thought he wouldn’t. Ranboo could leave. If he wanted to.

“I...” he said, “You... you should keep this.”

Tubbo’s nose scrunched up liked he’d just smelled something foul. “I don’t need to control and track your every teleport, Boo,” he said.

“I know,” said Ranboo, “but I think you should still keep it in case of an emergency: yours or mine.”

Tubbo studied him for a long moment. “You sure?”

Ranboo nodded and held it out to him.

“You can take it back anytime you want,” Tubbo reassured before reaching out and slowly taking it, giving Ranboo a chance to change his mind before pulling it away.

“Thanks,” Ranboo said.

Tubbo smiled as he made sure the remote was locked before shoving it in his pocket. “Now,” he said. “I really don’t want to walk all the way home, willing to give me a lift?”

“Of course,” Ranboo said, taking his arm. Anytime and anywhere.

But for now, a rundown apartment a few blocks from Guild Headquarters.



[from Imgflip Meme Generator](#)

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

I did have to add one tag because of some stuff implied here in Tubbo's backstory, so be warned. It's just a quick mention.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tubbo hadn't had many living family members growing up, but he had known very well what his lineage was. Who you were was the most valuable currency in the Pit and who Tubbo was or had been once was the most valuable of them all. Tubbo's great-grandmother was the infamous supervillain known as Wither; she had been one of the two main reasons the Pit had been created in the first place. Her only equal had been her partner in crime: Nightmare. Since Nightmare had had no children before she died, Tubbo's father was the highest status person in the Pit.

Wither had named herself after her own power which was known as withering. It wasn't an unknown power, but no one had been as proficient with it as Wither. She could touch a person, at the height of her power even just *look* at someone, and they would shrivel up and die. Everything down to their bones would turn to dust if she was pissed enough.

Even being thrown into the Pit without their powers, she and Nightmare had been at the top of the food chain. It didn't matter if she couldn't make people wither away anymore, she could kill just as easily and had powerful allies in her back pocket. Nightmare managed to acquire the only free source of magic in the Pit within a year and was willing to give Wither whatever she asked for at no cost. Her family had prospered in the Pit as much as one could. They were unbelievably powerful and cut down anyone that stood in their way.

Yet, there was another side to Tubbo's family.

If his father's side had held the most power when they'd entered the Pit, his mother's side had held almost the least. They'd had fairly simple and common powers from what Tubbo had been told. The most powerful could do things like create small vacuums and walk through walls, but most had mild physical enhancements like being slightly more durable, running a bit faster, or having better than average endurance. They had been low-level criminals. In Pit terms, they had been nothing. Yet, his mother had managed to find a foothold in Wither's family line.

His mother's line hadn't bent to their status in the Pit. Tubbo never got any of gory the details, but he did know his grandmother had managed to marry someone ranking in the middle of the Pit hierarchy. Tubbo's father had sometimes let some things slip on accident, and Tubbo had put together what the rumors said about his grandmother and what his mother had almost done to him. Tubbo had discerned that his grandmother had thrown her first child by another man into the void in order to gain enough power to leverage herself into a higher status marriage. (Tubbo's mother had died trying to do a similar thing to him when he didn't seem powerful or smart enough as a toddler, hoping to get a better version the next time around.)

His grandmother's status had been high enough then that she'd been able to do things like attend parties that Wither's family also attended. High enough that she was able to take her adult daughter to

these parties as well to aim for an even higher status husband and well... the Wither family had few morals, but family had always been important. Tubbo's existence had sealed that deal in blood. Tubbo was pretty sure his father always resented him for that at least a little.

He remembered how his father would hold him firmly in his lap the entire time when Tubbo's mother's mother came to visit after his mother's death. Tubbo had never spent any time alone with her. He'd known even at 4-years-old that his father would have preferred Tubbo never see her at all, but he'd been 19 with no parents and a dead wife. If Tubbo's grandmother had wanted to, she could have fought for custody and enough people would have supported her for it to be a legitimate risk. Yet, she wouldn't do that because then Tubbo's father would have had no reason to let her help run the Pit. Similarly, his father couldn't keep Tubbo completely away from her or cut off her power source, or she'd try to fight for custody.

His grandmother did disappear mysteriously from his life around the time he was 8, not that Tubbo knew exactly how. He hadn't missed her. She'd never been nice, but then again, who in his family had been?

Despite never liking when she came to visit, when he'd have to deal with his father's arms clenched too tightly around him and the clear tension in the air, he did still remember the lessons she'd taught him. Her lessons always boiled down to one thing: society was like a human body. It had moving parts that worked together and some were more critical than others. Some it could function without. Sometimes it would destroy itself from the inside out as you watched. Sometimes it would fight to live even while it bled to death. Always it had pressure points. If you found the right ones and pressed just right, it would either give you what you wanted or crumble to the ground at your feet.

These lessons were what Tubbo was thinking about as he studied the map of the city laid out on his living room table. He could see what his grandmother had been talking about honestly. There were vulnerable parts of the city: water supplies, roads, and places that stored hazardous materials. All it would take was a couple of well-placed explosives and the entire thing would crumble. Honestly, they needed a better design. Luckily, for the general populous, Tubbo's goal wasn't to harm civilians, so he'd leave those pressure points alone. Other pressure points, however...

There were colored pens next to him which he'd already used to mark up the map with a meticulous hand. He stared at the map still not fully satisfied.

Tubbo had two goals: to put pressure on the Superhero Guild so they would take action and to smoke out the SBI.

The first goal was laughably easy. Tubbo knew where the Superhero Guild was based as well as many of its secrets and all of its procedures. All he had to do was wear them down slowly over the course of a few days until they realized getting him to stop was worth more than avoiding agitating the SBI.

The second goal was much harder. Tubbo didn't have a leg to stand on. He didn't know a lot about the SBI other than what the general public knew and what Tommy had said. He didn't know the location of their base or anything about how they operated. There were no known alliances outside of their group for him to target or supply chains they needed for him to destroy.

What he did know was that their base was underground. He'd only been there briefly, but they'd pulled into a building and then gone down. He also assumed it was far from Blaze Labs, though Tubbo hadn't been able to make a mental map and wasn't 100% sure how long they were driving. For all he knew, they could have gone in circles for a while. Yet, the assumption it wasn't close to Blaze Labs was a good one. So, away from the city central and underground was the target.

White oak trees grew deep and expansive root systems. If they sprinkled some acorns around the city, mostly concentrated near the edges, he could get them to grow into every basement and bunker in the city as well as block off all exits from the city.

He had no idea if that was enough to do anything, but he was hoping it would force them to move, which would make it easier for Tubbo to figure out where they were. If he knew where they were, all he'd need were a few enhanced poppy plants and everyone in their base would be asleep. Then he and Ranboo would pop in and get Tommy out. Then, maybe pop back in.

Yet, that plan hinged on luck. He glared at the map but couldn't think of anything else. Agitated, he grabbed his list of supplies and crossed out the number next to "white oak acorns" only to replace it with a number 3 times as large.

A cup of tea was placed suddenly down in front of him on top of the city park. He glanced up. "Thanks," he said shortly, trying not to project his ire onto Ranboo especially when he was doing something nice.

"Can I help?" Ranboo asked.

"You already are," Tubbo assured, eyes shifting back to the map. "I just need to come up with the perfect plan."

He saw Ranboo shift awkwardly from the corner of his eye.

"What?" he asked.

"Maybe you should try to sleep?"

Tubbo removed his gaze from the map to glare at him.

Ranboo raised his hand placatingly. "I know, I know," he said, "but you didn't sleep last night either and planning works better with a clearer head. Maybe it would help."

Tubbo looked away to scowl at the map. He did have a point as much as Tubbo didn't want to admit it. Tubbo's brain currently felt like it was full of cobwebs, and it didn't help with coming up with better ideas. "I don't think I could even sleep," he said.

"At least rest," Ranboo suggested. "Lay down for a bit and try to relax."

Tubbo sighed and reached forward to take a sip of the tea Ranboo had brought him. "Chamomile," he said with narrowed eyes. "This was a planned attack."

"I mean, yeah," Ranboo said with a smile.

"Evil," Tubbo commented. "You make a good evil henchman. Perhaps I should promote you."

"Promote me to what?"

"My fidus Achates."

Ranboo's face scrunched up. "What does that mean?"

"I don't actually know," Tubbo admitted. "I just know it's a higher rank than husband." He shot a toothy smile at Ranboo.

“I guess I’m moving up in the world quickly then,” Ranboo replied, dryly. “Promoted from husband before the end of our wedding night.”

Tubbo chuckled and drank a bit more of the tea. “I never sleep well without Tommy nearby,” he admitted. “It’s... we were on the street for a while. Sleeping alone was dangerous.”

“I can stay up and keep watch if it’ll made you feel more comfortable.”

Tubbo shook his head. “You don’t need to do that.”

“I got some sleep last night,” Ranboo said, “and you need all of the rest you can get if you’re going to...” He gestured at the marked-up map in front of Tubbo. “I’ll sleep a bit when you’re modifying the plants tomorrow afternoon.”

“I don’t...”

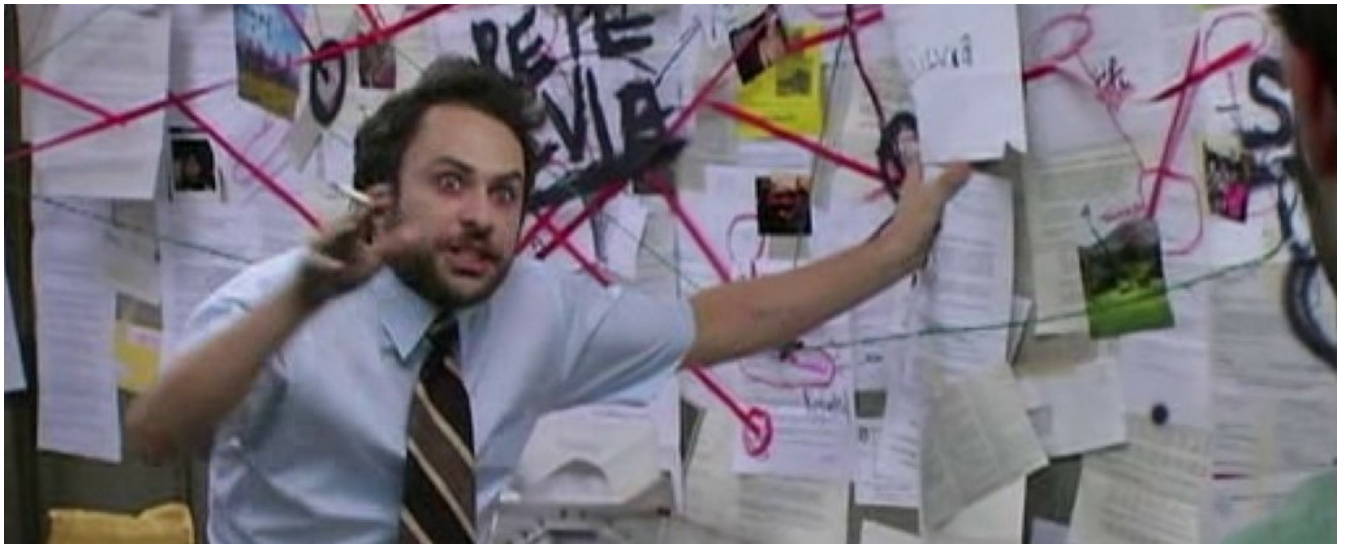
“It really would make me feel better,” Ranboo said. “I’ve seen the stuff you’re planning. More sleep means there’s less of a chance that you’ll accidentally blow us up.”

Tubbo sighed. “Fine,” he agreed. “I’ll try.”

He finished his tea and then let Ranboo shoo him into bed. He didn’t think he slept more than 20 minutes at a time that night, popping up with his heart racing before ever truly getting to sleep. Yet, Ranboo stayed at his bedside always coaxing him to lay back down for a little while. He didn’t feel fantastic in the morning, but he felt a little better.

Chapter End Notes

Tubbo:



Ranboo:



Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ranboo didn't know if he'd ever teleported this much in his life. Tubbo's list of supplies had taken them literally all over the world from deserts to jungles to swamps. Ranboo had been exhausted by the end of it between his lack of sleep the night before and the unprecedented amount of teleporting. Tubbo had noticed and told him to take a nap when they'd gotten back, shooing Ranboo into his own bedroom to rest.

He woke up hours later, as the light was starting to fade from the window. He'd fallen into Tubbo's bed absolutely exhausted, but now that he'd gotten some sleep, he felt surprisingly good. Well, his back hurt a bit because he was pretty sure whoever had made Tubbo's mattress had used rocks as stuffing, but overall, he felt... better than he usually did. Most of the time he felt constantly anxious and like he had too much energy, but he woke up feeling comfortable (minus the bed situation). His body liked being allowed to teleport often, he thought.

He rolled out of bed after a few minutes and headed to the living room. The living room and kitchen was an absolute mess not that Ranboo was surprised. There were plants of different types growing everywhere and bags of not yet grown seeds stacked on every surface. Colored pens, marked up maps of the city, and papers were scattered about. It looked like Puffy had used a tornado to fight a plant demon in the apartment.

Tubbo sat in the middle of the chaos on the floor. He was staring at a seed that was slowly growing in front of him. He was doing 'altercations.' At least, that's what he'd told Ranboo he'd be doing before Ranboo had gone to sleep. He trusted Tubbo, he really did, but the thought of whatever 'altercations' meant made something in him shudder.

"There's coffee on the counter," Tubbo said without looking up.

"Thanks," Ranboo replied. He wandered into the kitchen to find a covered pot of liquid next to the remains of what he assumed were coffee beans, but.... "Um," he said looking at the green coffee beans. "Aren't you supposed to... do something to coffee beans before making coffee with them?"

"Normal coffee beans are roasted, but I didn't have time for that."

"Ah," Ranboo said, glancing into the pot at a greenish amber colored liquid that look oddly... thick?

"Green coffee is a thing," Tubbo said. "It's not bad."

Ranboo took a breath. "Okay," he said, reaching for the empty mug left out on the counter and pouring some of the liquid into it. He took a sip. It tasted like acidic grass. It did not taste like coffee. He set the coffee mug back down on the counter. "How is everything going?" he asked.

"I've almost got everything ready," Tubbo said, then mumbled under his breath, "just have to make sure these things explode right."

Ranboo was going to ignore that. "Need any help?"

Tubbo glanced up. "Would you mind getting things cleaned up?" he asked.

“Sure,” Ranboo agreed. First, he decided to turn to the kitchen counter. He swept up the green coffee beans and threw them in the bin before reaching to move an unidentified small plant off of the counter. He yelped when the plant fought back, striking out at him with what looked like a mouth.

“Oh, right,” Tubbo said idly. “Careful with those. They bite.”

“Anything else dangerous I should know about while cleaning?” Ranboo said, a hand on his heart.

“All of this is dangerous,” Tubbo said, “That’s the point, but most of it won’t activate until I tell it too.”

Ranboo closed his eyes, pained, but did continue his quest to tidy up the apartment, though with a healthy dose more caution this time.

Tubbo had finished messing with the seeds by the time Ranboo was finished carefully moving all of the grown plants to one side of the apartment, gathering and shuffling all of the papers together, and putting all of the pens into a cup. Now, Tubbo was carefully putting those seeds in brown paper bags with other seeds he’d prepared earlier. Each bag was labeled with a number or letter in one of three colors. The numbers obviously referred to different areas of the city judging by the labeled map. The colors were green, yellow, and red. The letters were in red whereas the numbers were green or yellow. The exploding seeds went into the green bags. Ranboo was... a bit worried about what was in the red ones.

“Alright,” Tubbo said leaning back. “That’s it.”

“What’s the plan?” Ranboo asked, lowering himself down to sit in front of Tubbo on the floor.

“We take the green and yellow with us,” Tubbo said. “I labeled places on the map that you can teleport to without anyone seeing. The green bag gets scattered around while the yellow one gets planted underground in the marked-out areas. You can maybe do the green bags while I do the yellow. If that’s okay.”

“Sure,” Ranboo agreed. He hesitated but decided to ask. “What about the red?”

“Those stay here,” Tubbo said. “They’re for when we find them.”

“...Are you going to try to kill them?” Ranboo asked.

It was Tubbo’s turn to hesitate. “The first priority is getting Tommy,” he finally said. “The second is making sure this doesn’t happen again.” He looked down and away. “A-F are nonlethal.”

“Okay,” Ranboo said with a breath. “I’ll trust your judgment.”

He looked like he might cry for a moment, but then sucked in a breath. “Okay,” Tubbo said. “We’ll wait until it’s dark and we’ll be going in numerical order. The last is the zone with Guild HQ. I’ve timed it so we’re going in when it’s least busy and Dream is least likely to be there. I’d like to... send a message, but if you’re not comfortable going in, I can do it myself.”

“I’ll go in with you Tubbo,” Ranboo said immediately. “We’re in it together, and it’ll be safer with my teleportation available.”

A smile ghosted across his lips. “Thanks, I-”

Yet, whatever he was about to say was cut off by the sound of a phone ringing. Tubbo and Ranboo looked at each other for a long moment. Tubbo's phone was ringing from its place next to them. "Who would be calling you...?" Ranboo asked.

Tubbo shook his head, seeming just as confused as Ranboo was. He reached for the phone and flashed Ranboo the screen. It said, 'Unknown Caller.'

Hesitantly, he pressed the call button and put the phone to his ear. "Hello?" he asked.

Ranboo couldn't hear what was said, but he heard someone speak on the other end of the line and Tubbo immediately sat up straighter. "Tommy?!" he exclaimed, relief coloring his expression suddenly. "You escaped? Where are you? We'll come get you wherever you are. Are you okay?" Tubbo paused for a moment as Red Glider spoke on the other end of the line; Tubbo's expression shuttered once again. "What do you mean?" he asked slowly, "How are you calling me?" Another pause. "Why would he do that?" Tubbo glanced at Ranboo and Ranboo tilted his head in curiosity. "...Nice?" Tubbo asked slowly. He pulled the phone away from his ear and pressed the speaker button so Ranboo could hear. Ranboo did his best to remain absolutely silent as the Red Glider's voice came through the phone.

"They haven't been..." he trailed off for a second. "It hasn't been bad."

Tubbo pursed his lips. "It hasn't been bad?" he repeated, skeptical. Ranboo could see a muscle tick in his jaw. "Are you on speaker right now?" he asked harshly.

The Red Glider hesitated for far too long and Ranboo could see Tubbo's free hand start to dig into his own thigh. Ranboo quickly reached forward to pull his hand away. He started to squeeze Ranboo's hand instead. "Yeah," Red Glider admitted eventually, "but it's not... like that. I'm really okay."

Tubbo seemed far from assured. His grip on Ranboo's hand grew harsher. "Really?" he asked.

"Sure as bees make honey," Red Glider said in an odd tone that made Ranboo worry that he'd just given a distress code, but it seemed to be the opposite because just the slightest bit of tension drained from Tubbo's shoulders at the phrase.

He sat with the phone pressed to his ear for a couple of seconds before saying, "You *bled* all over my hoodie."

Red Glider sounded suddenly a little sheepish. "Oh, yeah... I got stabbed."

"I gathered that much from the knife hole," Tubbo said, voice faux calm.

"It's fine," Red Glider said. He sounded a touch nervous at Tubbo's tone, probably knowing even more than Ranboo what it meant. "I sewed myself up." He stopped for a second before continuing. "...aaaand then I ripped my stitches and Whippoorwill sewed me back up. He's a fucking bastard, but he's good with a needle. I'll give him that. So, everything's okay!"

Tubbo closed his eyes and tilted his head up to face his living room ceiling like he was praying or perhaps cursing God. "Tommy," he said on a sigh. "Please tell me Whippoorwill is not the one who's listening to this."

"He is," Red Glider confirmed, seeming wholly unconcerned with the fact that he'd called the supervillain a bastard while he was listening. "Why?"

"You can't," Tubbo sputtered. "Don't *antagonize* the supervillain you're in the custody of!!"

“But he’s a weirdo Tubbo,” Red Glider drawled. Ranboo could imagine him looking Whippoorwill in the eye challengingly as he said it. Ranboo braced himself to hear something unpleasant happen on the other end on the line, but nothing came.

“Tommy,” Tubbo snapped.

“It’s fine,” Red Glider assured. It did nothing to calm Ranboo’s heart. “We already had the torture discussion!” he said cheerily, “And surprisingly, he says he does not think it is PogChamp.” There was a pause as they could hear something shifting on the other end and Red Glider’s voice was fainter when he spoke next. “Tell him that you don’t think torture is PogChamp.”

There was a long pause that had Ranboo’s shoulders up to his ears and Tubbo squeezing his hand in a death grip, but then, Whippoorwill, one of the most notorious villains in the city, whose files of atrocities Dream had forced Ranboo to read even though he had never been expected to face him or his comrades unlike the Red Glider, took a breath, and said, “Torture is not... PogChamp.” He seemed to chew on the last word and there was a hint of annoyance in his tone, but there was something else to it as well that Ranboo could not place. He certainly didn’t sound like he was going to smack Red Glider for it once the phone call ended.

“See?!” Red Glider said, his voice back to being loud.

Tubbo seemed to not know what to do with this conversation. They were currently surrounded by bags of seeds, the red G-T labeled of which were prepared to specifically to kill Whippoorwill and his allies, and yet, the man had just awkwardly told them torture wasn’t PogChamp at the behest of the superhero he was holding captive. Weren’t supervillains supposed to scare the hostage’s family and friends by claiming they were being hurt even if they didn’t plan to hurt them?

“So, their being nice,” Tubbo finally said. He met Ranboo’s eyes clearly just as lost as he was, “and they let you call me.”

“Yeah, well,” Red Glider said flippantly, “I knew you’d worry and be all dramatic because you’re a clingy bitch.” Tubbo rolled his eyes. “I told them, ya know. I told them you were a clingy bitch, and so they decided it was okay to call you for your mental health and shit.”

“Ah yes,” Tubbo said, scowling. Ranboo was glad he was not the Red Glider in that moment. “My dramatic streak. You know, I was thinking of bleeding all over the apartment and then running off to hand myself over to my three biggest enemies, but then you called, so everything’s better.”

He knew. Red Glider knew what he was dealing with judging by the way he paused. And yet. And yet, despite taking a moment to think, he still went with, “Sounds like a pog plan, Big Man.”

Murder flashed across Tubbo’s face. “Hey Whippoorwill,” Tubbo said, eyes narrowed. “Just a warning.” His voice went dark. “I’m the only one allowed to kill him.”

Whippoorwill cleared his throat. “Uh... noted.”

“Also,” Tubbo continued. There was curiosity and a bit of calculation in his eyes as he continued speaking. He was feeling something out with the man carefully. “He lies about taking medication. He takes antibiotics willingly after he almost died once from an infection, but any other pill has to be shoved down his throat like a cat.”

“That’s not true!” Red Glider yelped, a bit of panic to his tone.

“You’re right,” Tubbo said, a cruel smile on his face. “Sometimes hiding it in peanut butter works.”

Red Glider made a noise of protest, but Whippoorwill was the next to speak. His voice was annoyed and almost chiding when he said, “I’ll make sure he takes the pain meds after he eats.”

Tubbo nodded to himself, having made some sort of judgement. His voice went softer when he next asked, “are they going to let you go soon?”

There was a beat that had both Ranboo and Tubbo tensing. “I don’t know,” he said almost flippantly. “Anyway, have I mentioned Whippoorwill has an ugly face? I’m looking right at it and it’s very ugly.”

Ranboo saw as Tubbo swallowed. Everyone... everyone knew what that meant. Red Glider had seen one of the SBI’s face. That didn’t... that didn’t bode well for his chance of an easy release. Why though? Ranboo had to wonder. He sounded like and he’d said he wasn’t being harmed, so why would Whippoorwill show him his face? If he planned to let him go, he wouldn’t, but what did he want with him then?

“Stop calling people ugly to their faces, Tommy,” Tubbo said, his voice brittle as he tried to keep up appearances. “Especially supervillains.”

“Why?” Red Glider asked, a bit of humor in his tone, but there was a more serious undertone to it than there had been a few minutes ago. “It’s true.”

“Please,” Tubbo pleaded almost in a whisper, and suddenly he wasn’t the same Tubbo that he’d been since Ranboo had walked him home. He wasn’t the person who had declared war on the city and quit the Guild in the same breath. He wasn’t the boy who’d let a flower die on his palm to intimidate county officials into letting them get married. He certainly wasn’t the Tubbo that had labeled bags of seeds in red. He was just a terrified boy who was very scared for his friend. “Please, just be safe for me.”

A breath blew across the receiver. “Yeah,” Red Glider said. “Yeah, I’ll do my best Big T. Anyway, this is actually only a 1/3 SBI approved phone call, so we better... wrap it up.”

Tubbo’s mouth opened, and he looked pained. “Bye,” he said softly.

“Bye,” Red Glider said. The phone clicked off directly afterwards.

They sat in silence for a moment. “Are you okay?” Ranboo finally said.

“He’s... he’s okay for now at least,” Tubbo said, voice wavering. “That’s more than I was hoping for honestly.”

“Whippoorwill didn’t seem... bad,” Ranboo hedged. “I don’t know why he’s not wearing a mask around Tommy, but...”

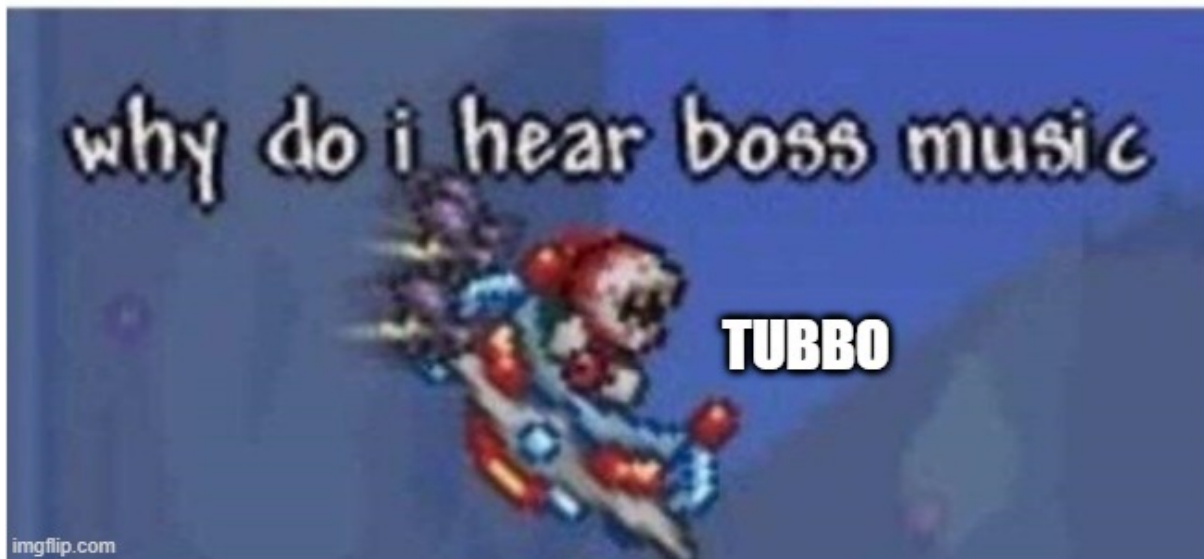
“Maybe it was an accident,” Tubbo suggested. “Or... something. I don’t know. The SBI are a little less careful with secret identities than most. Philza doesn’t even wear a mask. I think... I hope they are planning to give him back. Eventually.”

Ranboo wasn’t sure, but he wasn’t going to say that. “You’re probably right,” he said. “He glanced around the apartment at all of the bags of seeds. “So, are we...” he waved his hands at their surroundings, “not doing this then?”

Tubbo took a second to think. He stared at the bags of seeds laid out in front of him. “No,” he said. “No, we’re still doing it. If the SBI isn’t hurting him, if they’re treating him better than the Superhero Guild, then we know who our real enemy is.” He stood and stared at the pinned-up map of the city on the wall. “We just have to change a couple of things.” He traced a road with his finger. “Yellow bags stay here,” he said after a moment, “and we shift our goal to putting more pressure on the Guild. Whippoorwill seemed... reasonable. They’d probably... hopefully be willing to make a deal with the Guild like they’d been planning to do when I was with them. We just have to force Dream’s hand.” A tomato plant that had been in the corner suddenly began to grow faster, curling up to settle a newly grown tomato in Tubbo’s palm. “Yeah,” Tubbo said. Ranboo couldn’t tell if it was directed at him, at the plant, or if he was just talking to himself. “Let’s focus on Dream.”

Chapter End Notes

DREAM RANDOMLY AT, LIKE, 8:37PM



This is playing in Dream's head now for no reason at all. ([Flowey's Boss Theme "Your Best Nightmare" from Undertale](#))

[from Imgflip Meme Generator](#)

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Rage was a rare thing for him to experience. There was irritation sometimes or annoyance, but actual rage was rare. In fact, he was angry that he was angry in this moment. The boy wasn't worth his rage. This childish, immature act wasn't worth his rage. A tantrum wasn't worth his rage. Yet, there was something about the child. Something about his actions. Something about the phrase on his office wall that made Dream want to burn the entire city down just to get rid of the newly grown trees on the streets.

"Holy shit," the man next to him snickered. That just made the rage spike higher. He did not like the shapeshifter on a good day. Beyond just his personality in general, his shapeshifting nature made him laxer than most, and he was less likely to care for more than a few physical things with any intensity. It made him constantly annoying. Today, the man's presence only served to infuriated him. "Oh my god."

The city had woken covered in plants. They were everywhere and while they hadn't done too much damage, the trees growing in the middle of the street were disrupting the morning commute. He knew, of course, who had done it. He'd known immediately who had done it: Tommy's little parasite. The boy was throwing a fit like the child he was, and it had made Dream's life more difficult this morning. He'd been making Dream's life more difficult for a while now.

He was pretty sure after the last few days that Tubbo was at the root of his problem with Tommy. It made sense, after all. The only other recent time Dream had felt rage like this had been when Tommy had punched him at the beginning of this debacle, and that was about Tubbo. Every night he went home to Tubbo, and every day he came back with half of Dream's progress from the day before undone. It wouldn't be unreasonable to think that Tubbo was the cause of all of Tommy's annoying rebellions over the years.

"Those two are never seeing each other again," Dream said softly, mask pointed at the wall behind his desk. The words 'Fuck you, Dream' had been painted on it over and over again in what at first glance looked like blood but given the smell of the room as well as knowledge of Tubbo's powers was obviously tomato juice. Front and center behind where his desk chair usually sat was a crudely drawn, giant penis.

"W-what?" the shapeshifter asked, alarmed. Oh. Dream had forgotten about him. He'd dragged the shapeshifter into his office to deal with the tree problem seeing as he was Tubbo's mentor. Then, they had seen the other gift the teen had left him.

"I said nothing." Dream didn't bother to face him.

How had the boy even gotten in here to do this? The middle of the night or not, the Guild was full of superheroes, and everyone had seen his explosive tantrum or had heard of it. Plus, Dream was only gone consistently for two hours during the night shift. Both of which would never have overlapped with when Tubbo or even Tommy worked. How had he known Dream's schedule? His head tilted to face the left side of his desk.

That didn't matter right now.

What mattered was that Tubbo had done this. It was a clear challenge to him, but a childish one.

“You need to get your mentee under control,” Dream seethed, turning the mask towards the shapeshifter.

“Uh, Dream, he fucking quit and declared war on the city. He isn’t exactly my mentee anymore.”

“He didn’t quit,” Dream said, “and the city isn’t at war with him. He’s being an immature brat, but he’s still under the Guild’s control.”

“Bro, Dream, mi amigo, he literally said the words ‘I quit’ and stormed out of here. The fuck you expect me to do?”

“He doesn’t get to decide when he quits,” Dream snapped. “I get to decide. I’m in control. Me. You people don’t get to decide anything.”

“...Uh,” the shapeshifter said. “Wh-”

“**Forget it.**” Dream shook his head. The anger was still running through his veins hot and overpowering. *He felt like he might crack at the seams.* “I should just kill you,” Dream told him blankly. The words washed right over the man as though Dream hadn’t said them, of course. Honestly, the man was such a general annoyance. Dream wasn’t sure why he hadn’t already killed him. It’d be easy and more than quick with his superspeed. No one would even notice. He should just do it while he was thinking about it. He should do it right now.

Yet, before he could move to act, the door to his office busted open. “There’s so many fucking trees,” Sapnap declared as though everyone in the city wasn’t fully aware at this point. “I had to walk all the way to work.”

“You live less than 3 blocks away,” the shapeshifter said with an eyeroll.

“Well, you’d know, wouldn’t you, orange juice thief,” Sapnap seethed.

“Seriously? It’s been almost empty for two weeks. I decide to drink it, and you claim today is when you wanted some orange juice for breakfast.”

“I’m not talking to you,” Sapnap said, turning to Dream. “The point is,” he said. “I want to fly to work. Let me fly to work, Dream.”

“The last time you flew, you set 2 acres of a park on fire,” Dream reminded him. Sapnap had a moderately strong, but imprecise power. He could produce flames to fight and with practice could use them basically like a rocket to help himself fly. Overall, it wasn’t something Dream particularly needed, but it wasn’t a detriment to have it around either. “and got your flying license revoked,” Dream finished.

“But you can unrevoked it.”

If Dream could, he’d raise an eyebrow at him. Instead, he contented himself with tilting the mask in his direction. “I could.”

He literally threw himself on the ground at Dream’s feet then, kneeling, but the expression on his face was not one of respect, but more akin to a child in a sweetshop. *Dramatic idiot.*

“No.”

Sapnap pouted at him. “You’re a horrible best friend.”

I am.

Dream turned away from him to face the tomato-stained wall once again. He hadn’t realized his rage and irritation had faded until it came roaring back when he saw the letters.

Sapnap apparently had followed his gaze because he chortled suddenly. “You really pissed that kid off, huh?” he asked. “What’d you even do to him?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Dream said. “What matters is Quackity, as his mentor, is going to get him to knock it off.”

“What?” the shapeshifter asked. “Bro, Dream, mi amigo, he literally said the words ‘I quit’ and stormed out of here. I’m not his mentor anymore.”

“He’s just being a dramatic teenager,” Dream said. “I’m sure you can talk him down.”

“I don’t know,” Sapnap said. “This doesn’t seem like dramatic teenager shit. It seems like really pissed at you and the Guild shit.”

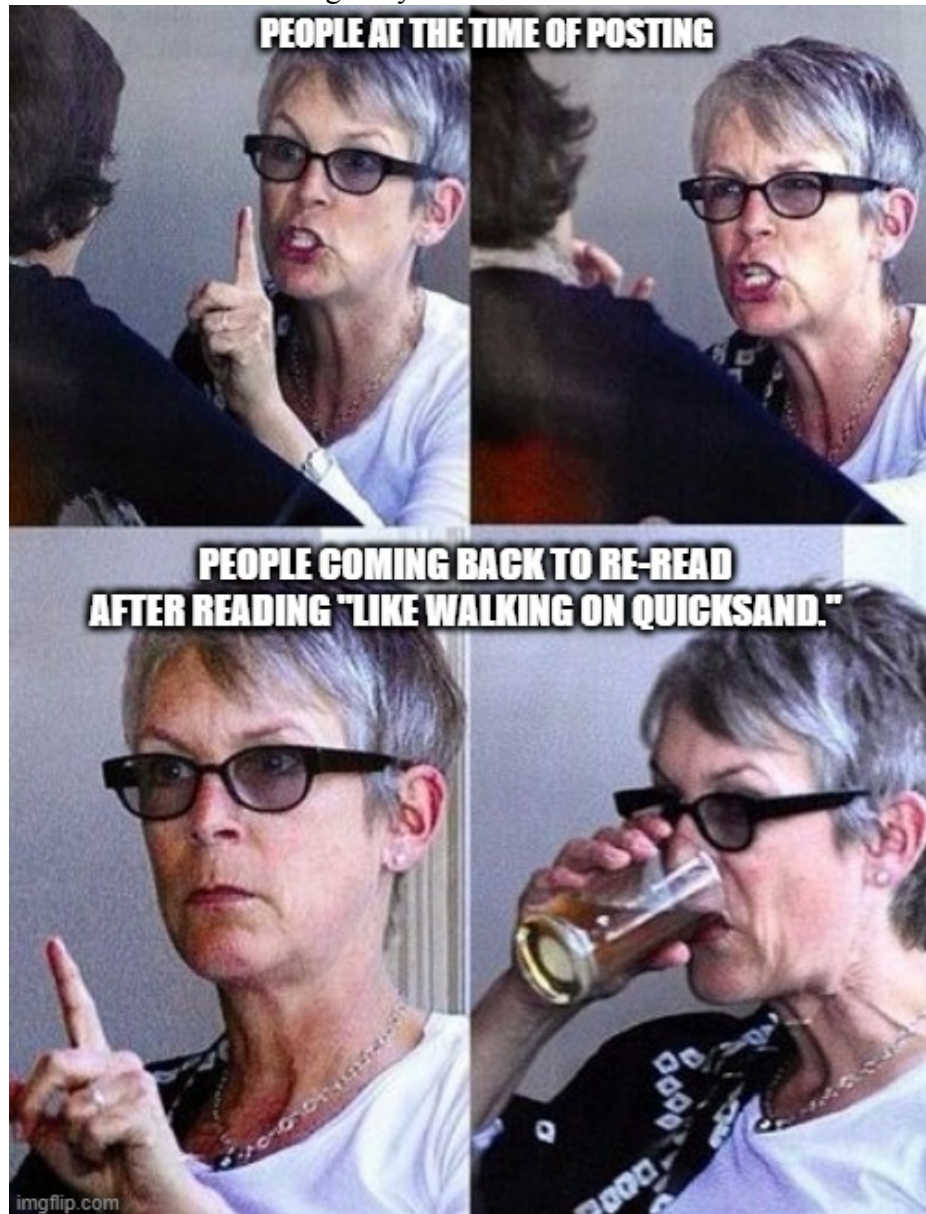
“All he’s done is grow plants,” Dream scoffed. “It’s not like he’s done any real harm.”

And then, as though the universe was waiting for it’s cue, there was suddenly the sound of multiple explosions from outside and screaming both from inside the Guild HQ and outside on the city streets.

“*Fuck*,” said Dream as he reached over to shove Sapnap out of the way when his office wall exploded.

Chapter End Notes

Have a meme. You don't get it yet:



[from Imgflip Meme Generator](#)

Message from the past: Hello people who have read "One Foot Loose Upon the Footpath" and "Like Walking on Quicksand." (Not yet released at time of posting.) How's it going? How you holding up?

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tubbo had never had to push his powers to the edge before. Nor did he today.

It was surprisingly easy to use them so substantially with the right motivation. Plants were easy. They were made to grow and didn't think too much about it unlike people. It helped that Tubbo didn't try to hold onto any of the plants he was growing. He could slightly control the movement of plants near him, but he didn't try to control the plants across the city. He just let them grow.

He'd picked and sometimes altered the seeds, so they had natural defenses like seeds that exploded or vines that lashed out at any touch. There wasn't a reason for Tubbo to try to control them after encouraging them to grow. All he had to do was give them a little push and they were happy to handle the rest.

The last things Tubbo pushed to grow were the modified Sandbox trees. One of them was set to grow into maturity directly outside of Dream's office wall. Tubbo had wanted to make sure as many normal people as possible were stuck at home by the other foliage before he let the more dangerous ones loose near the Guild HQ.

Alarms going off across the city followed the sounds of explosions. Tubbo drew his hands out of the plot of dirt he'd been kneeling in.

"Are you alright?" Ranboo asked. Tubbo didn't open his eyes. He felt a touch on his arm. "Tubbo?"

Tubbo let his eyes flicker open. They were surrounded on all sides by large stalks of lavender that hadn't been there when Tubbo had knelt in the dirt earlier. The flowers almost blotted out the sun with how thick and tall they were. He reached out to pluck some. They smelled like rage.

"Tubbo?" Ranboo said again.

"M fine," Tubbo replied.

Ranboo just frowned at him and there was suddenly a plastic bottle being pressed to Tubbo's lips.

Tubbo rolled his eyes and snatched the bottle from him to drink it on his own power. "Gah," he said the second he took a gulp. "What is that?"

"Mineral water."

"Ranboo, my beloved husband," Tubbo said, blinking at him. "What the fuck?"

Ranboo's shoulders relaxed at his reaction, and he laughed a bit. "I thought it'd be good for you," he said. "It's, uh, one of the things stocked in the Guild apartment refrigerators when you move in that I never drank. Plants need minerals so..."

"I'm not a fucking plant. Get out of here with your shitty expired water."

"I don't think water actually expires..."

“I’m feeding this crap to the lavender,” he said, pouring the contents of the bottle on the ground next to them. One or two stalks of lavender were still flowering around them. Tubbo had spent a lot of his anger, but there was still some simmering softly under the surface. “I want something better to drink,” he said. “Also, something better to eat! And you know what?”

“What?” Ranboo asked.

“I think we should go get ourselves something. Whatever we want! What fancy rich people food and drink have you always wanted to try?”

“Uh...”

“It can’t be alcohol though, because I have to be able to grow more plants if need be and you need to be able to teleport us away in case of emergency, but other than that, anything.”

“Uh, but how would we, you know, pay for that?”

“Ranboo,” Tubbo giggled. “I’m a supervillain! We don’t *pay* for things.” He paused and thought for a second. “At least, we don’t pay for things from megacorporations that throw bleach on the food they throw out. Tommy literally almost died from that once.

“But I mean... wouldn’t going out be a bit dangerous. Shouldn’t we lay low?”

“Lay low?!” Tubbo asked. “The city is cowering in fear of me in their homes right now. The heroes are trying to figure out how to defuse tree bombs downtown. Who’s going to be there to stop me from stealing from the grocery stores in rich people neighborhoods?”

Ranboo opened his mouth.

“Nobody!” Tubbo declared. “That’s who! Now, tell me what drinks and snacks you’ve always wanted to try. I’m hungry and thirsty.”

“Um...” Ranboo said. “I really don’t know.

“Well,” Tubbo said. “I want to try one of those fancy coffee things. You know the premade Starbucks branded ones you can find in shops? There’s apparently one called a mocha and I want it. Also, bon bons. I have no idea what those are, but I know the rich ladies eat them when they’re sad. I think they’re like peeps.”

“I don’t think they’re like peeps,” said Ranboo.

“I wouldn’t know,” Tubbo admitted. “Your turn.”

“Well,” Ranboo said tentatively. “I have always wanted to try all of the types of chocolate that come in those fancy boxes. Maybe some sort of fancy juice. I like peach flavored things.”

“Great! Where’s the closest bastard grocery store chain.”

Ranboo glanced around them. Before Tubbo’s lavender this had just been a dirty alleyway. “...Not... here?”

Tubbo turned puppy dog eyes to him. “Please?” he asked. “You don’t have to, but please?”

“You want me to use my powers to break into a grocery store?” he asked, sounding aghast.

“You just used your powers to help me commit terrorism,” Tubbo pointed out.

“Yes, but that’s. We’re…” he sighed and held out a hand. “Fine.”

Tubbo whooped and grabbed his entire arm.

Ranboo took a moment to think and then an instant later, everything was dark.

“Where are we?” Tubbo asked.

“I did a mission in a grocery store the other week,” Ranboo said. “I remembered there was a storage closet in the employee breakroom. I didn’t want to appear in the middle of a grocery store, just in case.”

“Fair enough,” Tubbo replied, already feeling for the door. He peaked out, but the employee break room was abandoned. He threw open the door the rest of the way and wandered to the door that led to the grocery store proper.

Tubbo had no idea where they were, but it definitely looked fucking fancy.

“Fruit!” Tubbo said in delight. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen so much fruit in my life!”

“It is a lot of fruit,” Ranboo said, looking around him. “I can’t believe people can just buy this much fruit.” He glanced at one of the nearby price tags and his eyes bugged out.

Tubbo tilted his head to also see the price tag and whistled. “I guess you can buy whatever you’d like for \$5.00 a pop. What are these apples made of? Gold?” He grabbed one from the stand and took a bite. He immediately spit it out. “Ew! Gold would taste better. Red delicious my ass.” He threw the apple as hard as he could, and it went splat on the floor a few feet away. “All rich people food better not taste like garbage.” Suspicious, he grabbed a different apple (which honestly looked much more like an apple and less like a plastic children’s toy) from a nearby stand. He took a more tentative bite of this one. “Oh, no, this one’s good,” he said, “and it’s only \$4.00. What the fuck is wrong with rich people?”

Ranboo just shrugged. Tubbo finished his apple. No seeds, he noted, despite this being a rich person’s store. “Come on Ranboo,” he said, dropping the core on the floor without a care. “Let’s get a cart.”

Ranboo still seemed a bit nervous about what they were doing, but he didn’t protest. He even relaxed after a couple of minutes, indulging Tubbo by letting him sit in one of the carts and then pushing him around in it. They ran down the candy aisle and Tubbo grabbed whatever he could manage to touch as they blasted past. They split whatever candy ended up in the cart when they got to the end of the aisle. They went back and picked up more of whatever they liked, shoving it into their pockets for later. They also grabbed one of the chocolate boxes like Ranboo had wanted.

They were ransacking the juice aisle when Tubbo’s phone rang. He’d wanted to shut the thing off, or better yet, flush the Guild issued phone down a toilet, but he had to keep it in case Tommy was allowed to call him again. The number that came up wasn’t the same unknown number from when Tommy had called, Tubbo noted in disappointment. It was a different, more familiar number.

He debated not answering, but out of some lingering respect, he pushed the talk button.

“Hi,” he said.

“Tubbo,” Quackity said. “I’m surprised you answered.”

“Mmm,” Tubbo said, taking a sip from a family sized apple juice jug.

“You weren’t at your apartment.”

“I’m out shopping,” Tubbo said.

“All of the shops are closed, Tubbo,” Quackity pointed out.

“And I don’t have any fucking money, Quackity.”

“...Right.”

Tubbo cracked open another jug of something that was an unnatural orange color while waving off Ranboo’s concerned look. “Honestly, that’s a bit stalkerish of you, going to my apartment uninvited without calling first.”

Quackity sighed. “Look Tubbo, I just wanted to talk.”

“I don’t think there’s much left to say,” Tubbo said. “There’s definitely not enough to need to talk in person, don’t you think?”

“Dream’s pissed at you,” Quackity said, and Tubbo always did respect him when he decided to cut the bullshit.

“Is he?” Tubbo asked. There was a bit of pleasure knowing he’d gotten under Dream’s skin a bit. He found himself smiling.

“He’s really fucking pissed man,” Quackity said almost scoldingly like he could see the grin on Tubbo’s face, “and when he gets pissed he....”

“I know very well what that man does when he’s angry,” Tubbo said coolly.

“Just... be fucking careful, alright kid. That’s all I wanted to say. I just...” he trailed off. “Yeah, that’s all I wanted to say.”

“Dream should be the one being careful right now,” Tubbo said darkly. The juice tasted like weird chemicals and sugar, but he kind of liked it. “Are you about to report this conversation back to him?”

“No,” said Quackity, “that’s not why I called you.”

“You should report back to him,” Tubbo said. “Tell him that I said he knows what I want, and this doesn’t end until I have it in my hands.”

Quackity hesitated. “Yeah, alright Tubbo. I’ll give him that message.”

“Good.”

There was a long pause. “Good luck out there, man,” Quackity said. “Stay safe.”

“Thanks for not being as shit as you could have been,” Tubbo said in response. He hung up as soon as the last word was out of his mouth.

“Is everything okay?” Ranboo asked.

“Everything’s fine,” Tubbo said. “Now where’s the fucking iced coffee.”

It was probably about time to end the shopping trip, Tubbo thought. He'd get his coffee and go. He should probably go check on his plants anyway.

Chapter End Notes



[from Imgflip Meme Generator](#)

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Are you sure we should be here right now?” Ranboo asked, glancing around nervously. They were alone in a closed-up apartment whose windows were darkened by thick vines hanging on the outside of the building, but Ranboo still couldn’t help but feel exposed.

To be fair, said closed-up apartment had a door with a now broken lock and had been recently ransacked by someone from the Guild. The evidence of said ransacking was all around them from cans of food dumped out of cupboards to the mattress being in the living room now. Honestly, it looked like they’d given up on finding things of worth pretty quickly and had moved on to destroying things to destroy them.

“We’ll be fine,” Tubbo said, unconcerned by the state of their surroundings as he stood on his tiptoes to shove the food they’d just snatched into one of the empty cupboards. In fact, he’d joked that they’d given him room in the cupboards for their new groceries upon seeing the state of the kitchen.

Ranboo had offered to help him put food away since he was tall enough for it not to be a bother, but Tubbo had grumbled something about ‘tall fucks’ putting ‘shit in places I can’t reach.’ So, Ranboo had decided to work on rounding up the old food that had been tossed everywhere.

Whoever had been in the apartment hadn’t even emptied all of the cupboards, Ranboo noted. The shelves too high to reach easily had been left alone, which just bolstered Ranboo’s suspicions that the destruction was just about rage. Why pour milk on the floor when you didn’t even look in the cupboards over the stove?

“Isn’t this, you know, the first place they’d look for you?” Ranboo asked, wiping up the last of the spilled milk. Based on the smell he was pretty sure this stuff had already been expired before being dumped out. Luckily, they’d gotten new milk at the store.

“It’s the first place they *did* look for me,” Tubbo replied, “and I wasn’t here, so now they’re gone.”

“They’re probably watching this place,” Ranboo pointed out.

“Probably,” Tubbo agreed, putting away a bag of chocolate covered peanuts. “But they’d be watching to see if someone walks through the front door, which we did not.”

“Still,” Ranboo said. “It’s pretty risky being here. What if they come back?”

Tubbo shrugged, putting a box of white cheddar mac and cheese next to the peanuts. (Whatever white cheddar mac and cheese was, it apparently cost \$6 just for one box, let alone for the milk that you had to add to it.) Tubbo closed the cabinet with a satisfied nod and turned to look at Ranboo.

“I have vines or hedges blocking off every entrance to the building,” he said upon seeing the distress still on Ranboo’s face. “If anyone crosses them, I’ll feel it and we can leave.”

He turned to walk to the other side of the kitchen. He’d laid Ranboo’s remote on the counter while unloading the groceries, Ranboo noted. He hadn’t picked it back up when he’d moved and now

Ranboo was closer to it than Tubbo was. That was weird to Ranboo. Ranboo could pick it up if he wanted. Tubbo probably wouldn't even be mad at him.

"Besides," Tubbo continued, glancing back at him. He definitely saw Ranboo looking at the remote, but he didn't comment or come back to snatch it up again. "Everyone's busy. They're not going to waste manpower checking an apartment they already confirmed I'm not in."

Tubbo stopped by where a bunch of old cheap take-out menus were taped to the wall. They hadn't been tampered with, but there was one for a nearby Thai restaurant on the floor. It had been deliberately placed there earlier, made to look like it had just slipped down the wall due to old tape. The rest hung next to each other, each slightly lopsided and seemingly put there without care.

Only someone with a hero mentee paycheck would realize Tubbo and Tommy wouldn't have enough money to order even the cheapest take-out when already renting an apartment.

Tubbo shoved up the menu for a Chinese place, revealing a hole in the wall just big enough for a fist slightly larger than Tubbo's to go through. In fact, Ranboo was fairly certain a fist had made the hole; it made him shudder in fear for the structural stability of the walls around them.

Ranboo had seen the hole Tubbo had revealed earlier, but it still made him cringe. There was what Ranboo was pretty sure was mold creeping around the edges of the hole and it disappeared into the dark abyss of the wall. Surely some animal lived inside it. Even if someone had looked under the curling take-out menus, no one would have stuck their hand into *that*.

Tubbo stuck his hand into it. The papers where Tubbo had drawn up his plans and a couple of large baggies of unused seeds were drawn out of the wall. They were slightly damp and dirty. So was Tubbo's hand.

"Also," Tubbo continued, flicking wall mud onto the floor, "if Tommy were to escape the SBI somehow, the first place he'd come is here and the second place is the Hero Guild."

And well, they both knew they didn't want that. It was the same reason Tubbo had insisted on keeping his phone on him despite both of them wanting to dump the thing before starting to attack the city. The point of this was to help Tommy. Tommy had already called Tubbo's phone once when the SBI let him, so the phone stayed. Making sure Tommy could find or contact Tubbo given the opportunity overrode Tubbo's need to be cautious, and Ranboo reluctantly accepted that.

As though brought on by Ranboo's thoughts, Tubbo's phone suddenly started to blare a loud tone making them both jump. Tubbo fumbled a baggie of seeds, dropping it onto the floor while Ranboo, who was closer to the phone, went scrambling for it to try to shut off the noise. However, he realized even as he was reaching for it that wouldn't be possible. It was a VAND alert.

The shrill noise cut off after a few seconds of blaring in Ranboo's hand, Tubbo having made it to his side by then.

It was not the first VAND alert of the day, but it was clearly a different type. The first alert today had been a simple notification for the entire city to go into temporary lockdown because of an unknown threat. The second had been an update on the first, putting the city into an indefinite level 3 lockdown with some vague information about what Tubbo's plants were and what they could do.

This alert, instead of being a text alert, pushed a video to Tubbo's lock screen with no way to back out of it.

For a moment, there was just a red screen with the words ‘VAND ALERT’ flashing on it, but then Dream’s smiley face mask popped onto the screen. The drawn-on eyes stared straight at the camera, seeming to bore into Ranboo like they could see him even through the screen. Ranboo didn’t even realize he’d had an instinctual physical reaction to Dream’s sudden appearance until Tubbo reached over and grabbed his hand, squeezing it.

Ranboo shook himself, slowly letting his shoulders relax and leaning into Tubbo.

He’d missed the beginning of the speech during his mini panic, but he tuned in a few lines in.

“-We are still under a level 3 lockdown for now,” Dream was saying from behind his podium.

A few other higher-ranking heroes were standing behind him. Ranboo recognized Puffy and Quackity standing there. Despite Dream’s calm words, Ranboo could almost see the tension rippling through the high ranked officers. They were all on alert and looking around while pretending not to be.

“But I assure you,” Dream continued, “the issue is being dealt with swiftly. There is *not* a new villain attacking the city. There was simply an issue at the Hero’s Guild that we are working on resolving. I advise you to stay in your homes for now, but the little danger these plants supplied is mostly over. What is left of them is being easily disbanded by our top heroes.” He gestured to the people behind him. A ripple of unease seemed to go through them, but no one disagreed, at least, not on camera.

That wasn’t... true, Ranboo thought. They had to know that wasn’t true. Tubbo’s plants had not been at all dealt with and that wasn’t Ranboo’s biases speaking. Downtown was wrecked. Things were blown up and there were trees growing out of the roads. Even if they did manage to get rid of the plants, there was still a good amount of structural damage to the buildings and roads. Ranboo was almost certain they hadn’t gotten rid of many plants though. Tubbo would have already known and would have said something.

Ranboo dared to glance at Tubbo who wasn’t emoting at all as the Guild Head continued to speak. A sprig of lavender sprouted in his hair and snaked its way to settle its blossoms near his ear. Ranboo gulped.

Tubbo tilted his head slightly to the side, studying the video, and then a smile somewhere between mischievous and malicious spread across his face.

“I’m growing the Venus Flytraps now,” he cheerfully proclaimed.

“Are you sure?” Ranboo asked even as Tubbo wandered away. “Those could be dangerous to civilians.”

“If the civilians are stupid enough to go outside during a level 3 and touch a giant Venus Flytrap, they deserve it,” Tubbo said, decisively.

They’d had a pot of soil on the table when they’d left earlier. It had been flipped over onto the floor, but Tubbo clearly didn’t care. He grabbed a baggie of seeds and went to sit crisscross in front of the dirt.

“What are you doing with that?” Ranboo asked. “Don’t you have to be connected to the dirt the seed is planted in for your powers to work?”

“Usually,” Tubbo said, “but I figured out that if I have a sister seed to the ones I’m trying to grow and I’m close enough, I can force them to grow simultaneously even if I’m only touching the soil for

one.”

“...You’re not going to grow a giant Venus Flytrap in your apartment, are you?” Ranboo asked.

Tubbo just gave him a slightly manic look and Ranboo groaned, taking a large step back towards the kitchen counters.

He watched Tubbo pull one of the prepackaged brown bags out of the plastic baggie. He poured the contents of the brown bag onto the soil. His fingers dug into the soil beside the seed.

As Ranboo watched, a green bud sprouted from the soil and then...

Ranboo’s attention was quickly drawn back to Tubbo’s phone when shouting came from the speakers. He just managed to catch it as a giant Venus Flytrap grew behind the podium Dream was speaking at and snapped its jaws around the hero before anyone could react.

Tubbo was smiling smugly and patting his own Venus Flytrap when Ranboo looked back at him with wide eyes. “Idiot should learn not to do all of his public speeches in the same place,” Tubbo said darkly, pushing his bangs behind his ear.

“Yeah,” Ranboo agreed, weakly, looking at Tubbo’s dirt-stained face.

The live video footage cut off abruptly, and Tubbo’s phone screen went dark.

“Uh,” Ranboo said, taking a step further into the kitchen. He could swear the carnivorous plant in the living room was eyeing him up despite not having eyes. “So, what are we going to do with the one in the apartment...?”

Chapter End Notes



[from Imgflip Meme Generator](#)

(It's a Cowplant from The Sims if you don't know.)

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The city was in a panic, even more so than before. Really, all Tubbo had done was grow a few man-eating plants. What was the big deal?

They continued to get VAND alerts even through the night. (Notably text only VAND alerts.) They all assured the citizens that everything was alright, that Dream was fine, and that everything was under control.

The citizens clearly did not believe that though judging by what was currently trending on Twitter. Tubbo didn't have a TV, but apparently the official TV news stations wouldn't stop playing the footage of Dream getting eaten and speculating on if he was alright and what was going on.

Tubbo half expected them to raise the VAND alert to a level 4 just to force the newscasters off air. At a level 3, people weren't allowed to leave the buildings they were in at the time of the alert but could go about their business in those buildings as usual. Reporters weren't allowed to go into work but if they were already there, they weren't allowed leave the news station without special permission; thus, they weren't getting any new updates about the state of the city.

However... if there were already bored people in the newsroom unable to go home... and the video of Dream getting chopped on was right there...

Tubbo couldn't help but find the whole situation very amusing. Ranboo unfortunately didn't find it as funny. He'd made Tubbo store his Venus Flytrap in the bedroom the night before, so he could have access to the living room without a man-eating plant staring him down. They'd fallen asleep crunched together awkwardly on the couch.

Now, Ranboo was pacing back and forth in front of Tubbo's couch, trying to burn off his nervous energy in some way. If he wasn't careful, he'd bore a hole in the floor and fall into the apartment below.

"I should do renovations," Tubbo said.

"What?" Ranboo asked, pausing in his pacing to look at him.

"I could grow trees strategically," he explained already flexing his powers and finding a few dormant tree seeds in range outside the apartment. "Give the apartment some more support, so it isn't about to collapse in on itself. Maybe fix the stairs so they're less of a falling hazard. Be a good neighbor and all that by improving the living space."

Ranboo pinched his brow. "Tubbo, Dream is going to be pissed at you," he said.

"He was already pissed at me," Tubbo said with an eyeroll.

"No," Ranboo said. "You don't understand. You made a fool out of him in front of people. On video! You can't... he doesn't like to be disrespected."

"I don't care what he likes," Tubbo scoffed. "Fuck him."

“You don’t understand,” Ranboo stressed. His distress had been mounting steadily since yesterday and he was in a right state now.

“Oh, trust me,” Tubbo said darkly. “I do.”

“No,” Ranboo said. “You don’t. You’ve seen the results of him being angry, sure, but Dream’s never even looked at you twice. Not even for everything you did this morning, but that VAND newscast.” He started wringing his hands. “He’s not going to take that lightly.”

“And?” Tubbo asked, annoyed. “What is he? A god?”

“He might as well be,” Ranboo said. “He basically runs this city if you haven’t noticed. What are you even going to do when you get Tommy back? The two of you won’t be allowed back as heroes. At least not without consequences.”

“I wasn’t planning to go back,” Tubbo said. “I quit, and I meant it. I’m done. If they’re going treat us like that, I’m never working for the Guild again.”

“Then what?” Ranboo asked. “You two won’t be able to stay in the city. Not only will Dream be pissed at you but Tommy he...” Ranboo trailed off and bit his lip.

“What?” Tubbo asked, eyes narrowing.

“Dream’s *different* about Tommy,” Ranboo said. “I don’t really know much, because Dream barely let me see Tommy let alone Tommy and Dream together, but I could tell... The way he speaks about him sometimes... there’s something different there. He’s not going to let Tommy go as easily as he would you or even me.”

“We’ll leave then,” Tubbo said. “You can teleport; just dump us off someplace across the world. It’d be nice to get away from this shithole anyway.”

“I don’t know if even that would be enough,” Ranboo said with a headshake.

Before Tubbo could ask what he meant, his phone suddenly rang and not with a VAND alert for once. Ranboo and Tubbo met eyes briefly and then Tubbo was reaching for the phone. It displayed the works “Unknown Caller” the same as it had when Tommy had called before and Tubbo’s heart was suddenly in his throat.

He put it on speaker so Ranboo could hear.

“Hello?” Tubbo said.

“Tubbo!” Tommy said, and Tubbo couldn’t help but feel a flood of relief at how light his voice was. He sounded okay, happy even if Tubbo wanted to stretch it. He didn’t sound like he was hurt and hiding it. Plus, just the fact that he was getting a phone call was a good sign. “Guess what?” Tommy continued. “I’m no longer a prisoner!”

“What?” Tubbo asked. “Did you escape? How?”

“No,” Tommy said. “Well, I’m still *with* them, but I’m not in a cell and I don’t have the power suppressant anymore.”

“You’re with them,” Tubbo repeated, blankly, “but they freed you?”

“Mhmmm,” Tommy confirmed. “Anyway, they offered us a job.”

“A job?” Tubbo echoed, narrowing his eyes. “What type of job?”

He heard someone speaking in the background but couldn’t make it out. So, they were still monitoring Tommy’s call, but not making him put them on speaker.

“Right, right,” Tommy said away from the phone like he was responding to whatever the unseen person had said. His tone told Tubbo he was rolling his eyes even though Tubbo couldn’t see him. “So, it’s not *exactly* a job. It sounds like more of a mentorship type thing or something, kind of like what people said it was like at the Guild before we got there.”

There was another contribution from the voice near Tommy that Tubbo couldn’t hear.

“But unlike the Guild,” Tommy continued without any acknowledgement to clue Tubbo into what had been said to him, “we wouldn’t really be fighting, at least for a while which would... be nice.”

Tubbo felt a pang of sympathy in his chest when Tommy said that. Tommy had been tired of the hero life or at least the type of hero life Dream forced him into for a while now. Tubbo could hear the exhaustion underlining his tone as he said that.

Tommy wanted a break from everything their life had been since... forever. Tubbo wished he could give him one, but what the SBI was offering, well, he wasn’t sure if it would be a break. It might even be worse.

“Plus,” Tommy continued. Tubbo could hear something in the background like Tommy was changing positions. “They have awesome food! Their prisoner food was good, so their ally food has got to be even better!”

“We fed you normal fucking food because we’re not assholes,” a voice that Tubbo recognized as Whippoorwill spoke up. Tommy had apparently moved enough that Tubbo could just barely make out what was being said by the villain.

“Still,” Tommy replied flippantly. “Good food. I’m guessing probably free medical treatment...?”

“Yes,” Whippoorwill said sounding almost affronted by the question.

“Yeah,” Tommy said. “Free medical treatment. Probably too much, actually. Will is, like, overbearing with the medical stuff.”

Will? Did Tommy nickname his supervillain captives? Did his supervillain captives give him nicknames to use for them?

“So, no worries there,” Tommy said. “Plus, nice room and board.”

“Board is just food again,” Whippoorwill said, exasperated.

“Yeah, well, it’s bitching food!” Tommy declared away from the phone. “Except the bread,” he said to Tubbo. “Do not let Mr. Blade,” *Mr. Blade?* “feed you bread. It has lumps in it. Still, it seems like a good idea.”

Tommy paused then, just briefly, a bit of the flippantness he’d been using fading from his voice suddenly.

“Turns out Blade’s actually from the Pit too,” he said to Tubbo’s shock.

Tubbo could see that Ranboo had heard that ‘too’ part and was looking at him strangely but said nothing for now.

“They, uh, the stuff I’ve been stopping them from stealing is stuff they want to use to take down the barrier around the Pit.”

That wasn’t... that wasn’t possible. No way. They had to have somehow figured out about Tommy being from the Pit and decided to dig into that soft spot of his to get what they wanted.

Yet even as the explanation came to mind, Tubbo knew Tommy would *never* have told anyone about their place of origin even if they’d managed to make him like them. The only way they’d know is if they’d told Tommy their story first and Tommy had decided to share his own.

But what person not from the Pit would even think to say that they were? Most surface dwellers forgot it even was there, festering under their feet. Even fewer would think up trying to get someone on their side by saying they wanted to let that rot out.

Unless there was something Tubbo was missing, The Blade being from the Pit could only be true.

“They want to take down the barrier?” Tubbo asked.

“I think we should help them,” Tommy said, and the voice he was using was the one Tubbo always had trusted unthinkably up until this point.

It was the voice that told Tubbo that his friend knew what he was doing and that Tubbo should follow his lead. It was the voice that had led them out of the tightest of spots over and over again. It was the voice that had kept them alive.

Tubbo didn’t know if he could trust the voice now.

Why would the SBI be make this offer? Even if Whippoorwhil had seemed reasonable during the first phone call. Even if Tommy had managed to not annoy them to his own death. Even if...

There was shuffling from the bedroom as the Venus flytrap in the apartment made a bid for freedom by swiping vines under the door.

Oh.

Oh, that actually made sense, Tubbo thought, putting the pieces together. They knew what Tubbo’s powers were and his connection to Tommy. The math wasn’t that hard to do. The display Tubbo had put on in the last 2 days surely hadn’t gone unnoticed.

Dream did not respect Tubbo; his enemies might.

“And they’re actually pretty nice,” Tommy said a bit lighter, but still in that calm voice that knew what it was talking about. For the next words, the voice was gone, replaced with something a little bit more vulnerable, a little bit more hopeful. “I want to accept,” he breathed.

Tubbo swallowed, indecision swamping his mind. These were *supervillains* offering to take Tubbo and Tommy into the fold. That was *terrifying*.

...

But wasn't Tubbo a supervillain too now?

He'd proven himself capable, a resource. If he accepted, he was sure he wouldn't be their equal. He'd fucked up the city and Dream, but he was nowhere near on the level of the SBI. He'd still have some semblance of pull though. He was powerful and they *wanted* him. It wouldn't be like the Guild that treated Tubbo and Tommy like dirt. If Tubbo was careful... he could spin this.

Plus, the SBI was powerful, more powerful than Dream individually, let alone together. Tubbo and Tommy taking off and running was one thing. Ranboo was right. No matter how far or fast they ran, there was a chance they'd still be caught, especially with an egomaniac with superspeed on their tail. The two of them taking shelter under the SBI's wing however...

"What are their terms?" Tubbo asked. "What will training look like? How often will we be expected to perform supervillain activities? Are there more responsibilities behind the scenes we'll need to know about?"

"...I don't know," Tommy said.

"What do you mean you don't know?" Tubbo asked, frowning even though Tommy wouldn't see it. "How many hours are we expected to work a week?"

"...Dunno..." Tubbo saw Ranboo grimace.

"Tommy," Tubbo said slowly. "What are their expectations of us? What are the *consequences* for not living up to those expectations?"

"Well, I didn't ask," Tommy said, sounding almost annoyed at the line of questioning.

"You didn't ask?!" Tubbo snapped. "You want to blindly accept a deal without even knowing what our end of it is?"

"Is that important?" Tommy said skeptically. *Is it any worse than the Guild?* Is what he was asking. However, Tubbo was trying to not make the same mistake twice, thank you very much. The last thing he needed was another noose around his necks.

"Did you at least ask about pay?" Tubbo asked tiredly.

"Was I supposed to?"

Tubbo pinched his brow. He looked up at Ranboo for help. Ranboo shrugged.

"Let me talk to one of them," Tubbo said firmly.

"He wants to talk to you," Tommy said and then Tubbo could hear shuffling as the phone was passed off.

"Whippoorwill again, I'm guessing," Tubbo said when he heard an inhale like the villain was preparing to speak.

"Yeah," he confirmed. "Just Will works for now, if you'd prefer."

There was that nickname again. Maybe it's just how the villains referred to him casually. Whippoorwill was a bit of a mouthful.

“So,” Tubbo said, trying to make his voice as level and firm as possible to cut through the bullshit and let him know he meant business. “What’s the deal then?”

“Pretty much what Tommy said,” Whippoorwill answered evenly. “Food, bed, anything you need really.”

“Oh, I get the benefits,” Tubbo replied haughtily, channeling his grandmother from the couple of times he’d heard her making business deals that always screwed over the person on the other side of the table. “I’m asking why, which it seems Tommy did not think to ask about.”

A slight pause. “What do you want to know?”

“What do you expect to get out of the deal?” Tubbo asked. “I assume you saw my show?”

They weren’t going to play games. They both knew why this offer was being extended and Tubbo wasn’t about to beat around the bush.

“We did, yes,” Whippoorwill acknowledged. “You’re powers and strategy are impressive.”

And despite everything, Tubbo couldn’t help but feel just the tiniest bit of pride at someone actually acknowledging it after Dream had blown him off.

“But,” Whippoorwill said, “that’s not the major reason for the offer.”

Tubbo narrowed his eyes. “What is then?” he asked.

“A mix of we like Tommy and fuck the Guild,” Whippoorwill said.

So, it wasn’t just about Tubbo and his powers, but taking a powerful hero from the Guild, from Dream. A dick measuring contest gave a bit less power to Tubbo in the scheme of things, but it was still workable.

Plus, saying “fuck you” to the Guild was a nice benefit for Tubbo as well. A mutually beneficial part of the bargain, one might say.

“Well,” Tubbo acknowledged. “We can agree on that at least, but you still haven’t answered about what you’d want from us.”

“Not really anything,” Whippoorwill claimed. “We don’t allow minors to fight for us. The main benefit is getting you away from the heroes.”

That deal sounded even better than what Tubbo had been expecting.

It was too good.

“So, it’d be more like training than anything until we’re adults?”

There was hesitation and it made the hairs on the back of Tubbo’s neck stand on edge. “There can be training if you’d like,” he said slowly. “We’d probably not want you to fight at least a little past adulthood. Eighteen isn’t some magic number. When Philza used to work for the Superhero Guild, you couldn’t even apply until you were 18 and would train for at least a year if not more depending on your job before seeing combat.”

They were going off of old Guild practices? On one hand, submitting himself and Tommy to basically another Guild training program sounded like actual hell, but on the other hand it was apparently the old training program. From what Tubbo understood from talking with older colleagues, that wasn't nearly as bad.

"He left a lot of hero stuff behind when he quit," Whippoorwill said, "but he kept that mindset. Ironically, it seems the heroes didn't."

No. They hadn't. The Guild had changed since Philza was a hero that was for sure. It actually made him wonder...

"Why did Philza quit the Guild?"

"Why do you want to know?" was the surprised reply.

"Well, I just quit the Guild," Tubbo pointed out. "I have my reasons. I want to know his. It seems like an important thing to know if we're going to be allies."

Whippoorwill contemplated this for a long moment.

"He'd been acting out of line at work for a while," he eventually said. "Nothing major, but he liked to ask questions people didn't like and poked his nose into things he thought smelled rotten. A team of 6 heroes who'd been up to some shady shit decided to nab his 14-year-old kid pretending to be villains and hoping that the threat to his family and subsequent 'saving' by one of the heroes would make him back off and step in line. Despite it being clearly justified, the higher ups at the Guild were a bit pissed when I managed to take out the gag and proceeded to scream so loud their chests exploded. Though, they ended up blaming Blade for it. Philza had enough of their bullshit and quit then."

That had... not been in any of the Guild files talking about the SBI for sure. It was an unverified story and cast Philza's abandonment of heroics in a much better light. Tubbo was inclined to believe it however, at least a little bit. Lord knew the Guild hated when people stepped out of line.

"So?" Whippoorwill asked when finished with his story.

"One last thing," Tubbo said, because he had to know.

"Sure."

"You *hated* Tommy a week ago," Tubbo said darkly.

"Yeah," Whippoorwill acknowledged casually. "And a few years ago, Philza and Blade first met at sword point." He paused. "Things change. We're willing to let them."

And the Guild isn't. That much was clear.

"Plus," Whippoorwill said, his tone changing from casual and calm to amused, "he's cute when he's not kicking me in the face."

"I'm not cute!" Tommy's voice screeched from somewhere nearby. "I'm manly and handsome!"

"I said when you're *not kicking me in the face!*" Whippoorwill yelled, away from the phone.

There was a sound of some sort of scuffle and Tubbo tensed, but Tommy sounded not at all harmed when he hollered, "Give me back the phone! You're spreading lies and slander!"

“I’m sorry about him,” Tubbo said quickly, trying not to scream himself. He had to remain cool and calm and slap Tommy for antagonizing dangerous not-quite-allies later.

“No need,” was the reply, still light despite Tommy clearly attempting to annoy him. ““We’re fully aware of what we’re inviting into our home. He’s unfortunately endearing even when he’s trying to bite me!” The voice squeaked became more distant for a moment. “I’m sure you understand,” he said back at the phone a moment later.

“I do unfortunately,” Tubbo replied.

He could still hear little curses from Tommy, implying that he was okay. That was good... that was more than Dream would have ever tolerated. Either they weren’t lying and liked Tommy or they really wanted Tubbo to join them. Either way, Tubbo could work with that.

“Okay,” he said. “I’ll hear you out, but we meet on my turf, and you bring Tommy.”

“Of course,” Wilbur agreed easily. “Just give me a time and a place and maybe make a path for us around the *garden* you currently have going on.”

“My and Tommy’s apartment,” Tubbo said without room for argument. “He knows where it is. How soon can you get here?”

“Give us an hour and a half.”

“Fine,” Tubbo said, glancing at the time on his phone. “Where would you be coming from, so I can clear a path?”

“We enter city limits on Route 6.”

That surprised Tubbo as he’d expected them be based somewhere in the city.

“Fine,” Tubbo agreed.

“Great. Will you talk to Tommy again now before he hurts himself trying to beat me up?”

“Sure,” Tubbo said.

Almost instantly there were a bunch of crackling sounds as it sounded like the supervillain tossed the phone at Tommy instead of handing it to him.

“Tubbo, he has been spreading lies and slander!” Tommy shrieked instantly.

“Tommy,” Tubbo said, gritting his teeth. “Stop kicking the supervillain.”

“Whaddya mean stop kicking the supervillain? He deserves it!”

“Tommy...” Tubbo scolded.

Whippoorwill said something Tubbo couldn’t hear.

“Okay,” Tommy agreed.

Something else was said.

“Fusspot,” Tommy grumbled. “Hey!”

Tubbo waited.

“He’s gone,” Tommy said after a moment.

“What the fuck, Tommy?!” Tubbo asked.

“It’s a good deal,” Tommy said, calmer now that Whippoorwill was not in the room.

“We barely even know what our side of the deal we’re making is,” Tubbo said.

“I don’t care,” Tommy said.

“How can you not?” Tubbo asked.

“I’m pretty sure the benefits outweigh anything they’d want us to do,” Tommy said. “He didn’t even look like he thought about slapping me when I kicked him in the face.”

“And how long will that last?” Tubbo snapped.

Tommy was silent.

“You’re compromised,” Tubbo accused, not even able to believe it. Tommy wasn’t easily manipulatable.

“I could have left.”

“Oh sure,” Tubbo said with an eyeroll.

“I did leave,” Tommy said. “They didn’t follow me. I came back.”

But did Tommy know that for sure, or was it all just one big manipulation?

“I’m making an exit plan for us,” Tubbo said through his teeth. “You don’t get to know it.”

“Fine,” Tommy agreed, sounding a bit salty about it.

“Fine,” Tubbo echoed. “I’ll see you in an hour and a half.” He hung up the phone then without giving Tommy a chance to reply.

“You okay?” Ranboo asked a few seconds after the phone call ended.

“Peachy,” Tubbo snapped. Then he bit the inside of his cheek. “Sorry,” he gritted out.

“It’s okay,” Ranboo said.

Tubbo sighed and put his head in his hands. “We have an hour and a half to clean up this place and come up with a safety net for my stupid as hell best friend.”



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Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Are you sure this is a good idea?” Ranboo dared to ask, eyes darting around the small room they were in.

“This whole thing is a bad idea,” Tubbo replied. “Tommy’s a fucking idiot. I’m about to let supervillains take me to a secondary location. Willingly. Dream’s going to try to murder us when he finds out Tommy’s ‘betrayed’ him. And you’re volunteering to play double agent on Dream who’s already pissed at you for letting Tommy go once.”

“Yes,” Ranboo said, “and I agree all of those things are concerns, but I was actually talking about the giant Venus Flytrap you just put in the corner of our secret bunker.”

Tubbo glanced at the Venus Flytrap, patted it, and then looked back at Ranboo. “It’ll be like a guard dog,” he said, waving his hand around. It bobbed its... (Do Venus Flytraps have heads? Ranboo was just going to call the top part of it a head.) It bobbed its head, following the movement of Tubbo’s hand almost like it was nodding along.

“But how do I feed it?” Ranboo asked. Without becoming dinner myself, he added in his head.

“Just lob it a hunk of meat every, I don’t know, week or so. It’ll be fine.”

Ranboo eyed the plant warily. *It* was not what Ranboo was worried about. It appeared to grin back at him menacingly.

“Here,” Tubbo said. They’d stolen a few steaks from the grocery store which he’d brought along. He tossed one of the steaks towards the Venus Flytrap and it caught it in its mouth. The mouth clicked shut and fused around the piece of meat.

Ranboo wondered how strong that seal would be around a person. He knew Dream hadn’t been able to get out on his own in the time before the broadcast cut off. And he had superspeed!

“See,” Tubbo said cheerfully. “Like that!”

Tubbo was going to be the death of him, and not even for his dangerous gamble with a team of supervillains which was forcing them to make this secret bunker in the first place.

“How did you even know about this place?” Ranboo asked.

“Oh,” Tubbo said. “It’s actually where the SBI did the trade-off of me for Tommy.”

“Is it a good idea to set up your emergency bunker in a location the people you might be fleeing know about?” Ranboo asked. They were in an old train yard that Ranboo hadn’t been aware existed before today. Having grown up in the city, he’d never seen a train before or even a train track to imply any used to come to the city. However, the existence of this place implied there once had been many trains in the area.

“This would be the last place they’d look for us,” Tubbo said, “and also a place the Guild wouldn’t think about. It’s not a permanent place if worst comes to worst anyway. It’s just a meeting place while

things are good and a quick place to stop for supplies if things go sour.”

The train car they’d chosen to make into their bunker was well stocked. There were three backpacks already packed with as much (stolen) nonperishable food, water, and medical supplies one person could feasibly carry. There were other supplies stocked on shelves as well along with a few changes of clothes and different styles of masks.

They’d also brought everything from Tubbo’s apartment that he didn’t want the SBI or even Tommy to see. All of the written plans and leftover seeds (besides a few they’d purposefully left in the apartment as a failsafe) were in the train car, not to mention the carnivorous plant. The apartment had basically been stripped of all signs of their activities over the last few days.

“If you’re sure,” Ranboo said.

“About this part, yes,” Tubbo said. He strode out of the train car then and Ranboo followed. Ranboo carefully closed the door behind them so nothing could be seen. When he turned back Tubbo was staring at the skyline with a furrow between his brows. They could just barely make out a blob of green that was the city currently.

Ranboo put a hand on his shoulder. “I’ll literally be a button click away,” he reminded. Tubbo’s eyes moved from the city to look at him. He gave a little half smile and then took a breath.

“Right,” he said, all business. “We should get back. They’ll be getting to the apartment soon.”

Ranboo nodded and teleported them back to the apartment.

Tubbo did one last look around to make sure there was nothing left that they should have gotten rid of. The only things of note left in the apartment were two bags. Tubbo’s duffle bag had a few articles of clothing, some energy bars, and what little cash he had laying around stuffed in it, but it mostly contained seeds, both for self-defense and for contacting Ranboo.

Ranboo’s backpack had the siblings to those seeds. Much like how Tubbo had grown the Venus Flytraps before, corresponding flowers would bloom in Ranboo’s backpack if Tubbo grew one of his. Also, in Ranboo’s bag was a set of pens and a new spiral notebook where he’d jotted down the meanings of all of the flower codes Tubbo had told him.

Tubbo’s way to talk to him was rather complicated. Ranboo’s way of contacting him was much easier. Tubbo would just make sure the remote was on him at all times and it would vibrate whenever Ranboo teleported. They had a few key messages with his teleportation in place, but it was mostly just normal Morse Code.

Ranboo had suggested Tubbo use the controls on the remote to contact Ranboo back. He could use the button to restrict Ranboo’s powers briefly and use the same Morse Code system. The restrained feeling was uncomfortable for Ranboo, but only a light sting if his powers were not locked down too long. Tubbo hadn’t liked that idea, so they went with the flowers. Though if it was an emergency, he’d always have the option to call Ranboo directly to him.

Tubbo and Ranboo’s minds must have been in the same place because Tubbo turned to his bedroom. “I need something to hide this remote in,” he muttered more to himself.

Ranboo followed him and watched him dig through the remaining clothing in the drawers. He pulled out a blue cloth.

“Fucking Tommy getting his ass stabbed in the one good hoodie,” he spat as the too tight hoodie got stuck as he tried to put it on.

“Here, that’s not going to work,” Ranboo said, walking forward to help him detangle himself from the cloth. He bit the inside of his cheek to keep from laughing at his thoroughly tousled hair and grumpy expression. “Take mine,” Ranboo offered. He reached up to pull his own hoodie over his head.

“You’re sure?” Tubbo asked, blinking in surprise.

“I’m sure,” Ranboo said. “It’s better for me if you take it anyway. It’ll hide the remote better if it’s big on you.”

“Good point,” Tubbo said, taking it from him and pulling it over his head. It was comically large on him considering their difference in height. A snort managed to escape Ranboo at the sight despite his best efforts.

Tubbo glared at Ranboo upon hearing the sound. Ranboo just rolled his eyes with a grin even though the remote was literally in Tubbo’s hand. As expected, the boy shoved the remote in his pocket without touching any of the buttons.

Tubbo paused then like he was hearing a distant sound. “A car just rolled over the vines I set up outside,” he said. “You should go.”

“I’ll follow you,” Ranboo assured. “And I’ll keep the seed bundle with me.”

“Orange begonia when I find a chance for us to talk again.”

Ranboo nodded. “Good luck,” he said.

Tubbo nodded back and smiled. “You too.”

Ranboo didn’t go far. Tubbo had grown him a small temporary treehouse across the street, and they’d opened the curtains wide, so Ranboo had a good view of the living room and part of the kitchen.

Three people were getting out of a car when Ranboo arrived in his hideout. He immediately pinned the shortest one as the Red Glider, as Tommy. He seemed fine from what Ranboo could see of him. He certainly didn’t seem to be in distress, and he’d gotten out of the backseat on his own power.

Ranboo would guess the two people with him were The Blade (considering the pink hair) and Whippoorwill (considering the stature).

Ranboo watched as they disappeared inside the apartment complex; a few minutes later he could see more figures than Tubbo moving around in the apartment upstairs. Tubbo sat in the armchair near the window after a bit, which probably meant thigs were going fine for now.

To Ranboo’s bewilderment, The Blade ended up carrying the armchair out to their car, but other than that oddity, nothing seemed to be going wrong with the interaction. Tubbo didn’t send any flower signals or push any buttons on the remote, and the car started driving away.

Ranboo followed at a distant, teleporting along with the car, but making sure to stay hidden. They ended up stopping at a bakery which Ranboo assumed was some sort of front or secret base in the city for them. At least, he did until they came back outside after a few minutes with coffee cups, a pastry boy, and some other box.

Weird.

The car started moving again, this time heading outside of city limits. The stretch of highway right outside the city was a bit difficult for Ranboo as it was hard to find hiding places there. The last thing he or Tubbo and Tommy needed was for one of the supervillains to spot a teleporter tailing them right now.

Luckily, they eventually turned into a wooded area which made it much easier for Ranboo to stay out of sight.

Ranboo was half worried with how deep they were going into the woods that the supervillains planned to murder Tommy and Tubbo and dump their bodies, but eventually there was a break in the trees and a picturesque house by a small lake came into view. The car turned into its garage.

There was nothing else to see after that as they apparently entered the house through the garage. Ranboo teleported around the property, but he couldn't find a secure location where he could see into whatever part of the house the occupants were in. Instead, he ended up taking refuge in a tree and waiting for a signal from Tubbo.

It was probably about half an hour later that he heard a soft rustle in his backpack. He unzipped the front pocket and found a blue flower poking out of the handfuls of dirt he'd shoved in there.

Ranboo already knew what that meant but checked his journal for the meaning just to be certain. Monkshood or Wolf's Bane. It was the signal for everything being fine.

Ranboo sighed in relief, though he knew that wasn't a guarantee everything would continue to be fine forever.

He waited around for a while, but when darkness fell and no begonias bloomed in his backpack, Ranboo teleported back to an alleyway near the Guild Apartments he lived in. He was sure no one was bothering to watch the cameras in the apartments right now, but he didn't want any record to exist showing he'd been able to teleport while Dream had benched him.

He fell into his bed exhausted but still ended up sleeping fitfully with his arms wrapped around his slightly unzipped backpack.

More flowers bloomed late the next morning and throughout the day. All of them were neutral to positive flowers indicating Tubbo's safety, but it wasn't until late the next night that an orange begonia finally bloomed.

Ranboo left his apartment immediately. Despite the fact that Tubbo was out of the city now, the streets were still choked with plants. Once he found shelter in the alley he'd used the night before, he teleported in place twice.

After a moment, he felt the familiar, but much less daunting for once, pull on his core. His teleportation powers activated without his own effort, sending him to the remote's current location. When he arrived on the rooftop of the house he'd seen Tubbo disappear into yesterday, Tubbo was already shoving the remote back in Ranboo's hoodie pocket.

He looked fine, which Ranboo had already known because of the various flowers he'd gotten throughout the day, but it was still nice to see it in person. He might even look better today than yesterday after presumably finally getting some food and sleep.

“Sorry it took so long,” Tubbo said. “I accidentally crashed last night, and I couldn’t get away earlier today because one of them was always around.”

“It’s fine,” Ranboo said, coming to sit next to him. The moon was almost full and its light filtering through the trees drew weird shadows on Tubbo’s face. “Everything’s going okay then?”

Tubbo sighed, wrapping his arms around his legs. He almost completely fit inside Ranboo’s hoodie as he did so. “I think so,” he said. “For now. There’s no immediate danger at least it’s just...” he trailed off. Ranboo watched him as he gathered his thoughts. “This isn’t what I was expecting.”

“In a bad way?”

Tubbo tilted his head, thinking about it. “In a too good way,” he concluded. “They gave us a nice room in their house, and we eat meals with them. I fell asleep watching a movie last night. I don’t... this isn’t the business deal I wanted. It’s more like they just brought home a new puppy. Except Tommy’s the puppy and I’m... I don’t know, the puppy’s favorite chew toy they let him take home with him.

Ranboo squinted at him.

“It’s not a perfect metaphor,” Tubbo said, waving a hand through the air. “The point is I was not prepared for whatever *this* is.”

He squeezed his knees tighter to his chest and looked over at Ranboo. Ranboo had seen a lot of emotions from Tubbo since they’d met and he’d seen even more in the past few days, but he didn’t think he’d ever seen an expression so openly vulnerable on his face.

“Are you okay?” Ranboo asked.

“I’m terrified,” he admitted in a whisper.

Ranboo took half a second to respond. “That’s okay,” he said. “That’s fair.” He reached forward to clasp Tubbo’s shoulder. “I’ll be here if anything goes wrong.”

Tubbo looked up and smiled softly at Ranboo. Despite the uncertainty they both still held about the supervillains in the house below them, Ranboo did notice there was a small spark of some very, very tentative hope in his eyes today that hadn’t been there before. “Thanks,” he said.

Ranboo shrugged. “What are husbands for?”

Tubbo snorted and leaned his head against Ranboo’s shoulder. He’d have to go back inside soon. It was dark and cold, and someone could notice him missing at any moment. For now though, things were fine. Maybe they even would continue to be.

Chapter End Notes

Tubbo: I am a chew toy to them.

Ghostbur: My investment in brother stocks has increased by 200%! This has been a very lucrative day.

Phil: :0

[Techno (in the background): This man is carrying a poisonous plant around like a teddy bear.]

And that's the end of the midquel! Thanks so much for reading!!! Don't worry, Ranboo will eventually have his chance to get yoinked by the supervillains.

End Notes

[Anyone want fan-art of Tubbo going absolutely feral?](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!